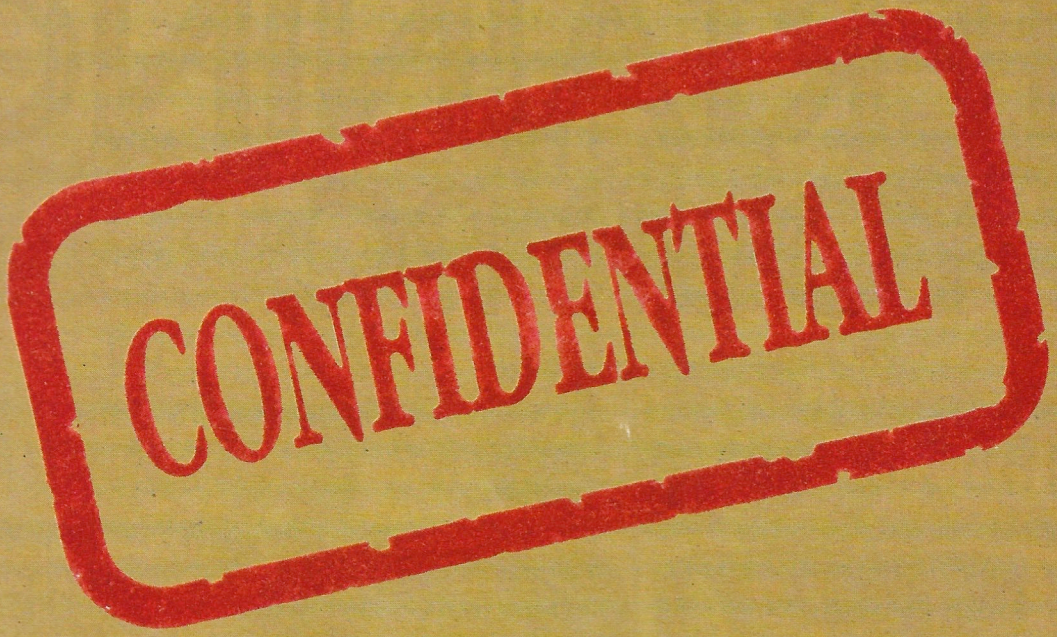


FILE NUMBER EIGHT

December/January 1989

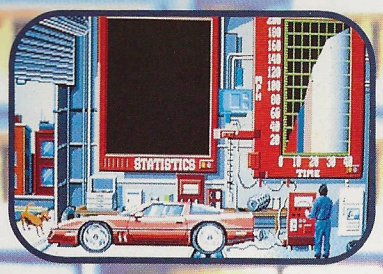
Members' Eyes Only

ENTERTAINING YOUR P.C.

VETTE™
Spectrum Holobyte

Outstanding 3-D solid modelling graphics. Accurate mapping of San Francisco streets and landmarks. Real manoeuvrability. Test performance factors of each Corvette. Varying difficulty levels. Option to choose from 4 Corvettes. So get set, buckle up and rev up. But a word of caution – don't be too reckless or you might leave more than your heart in San Francisco!

£34·99



DUNGEON MASTER™
FTL

Step into the world of DUNGEON MASTER and see fantasy come to life. Set in the depths of the mysterious underground, DUNGEON MASTER puts you inside the most detailed dungeon ever created in software. Everything moves and works! Pick up objects with the mouse and take them with you or pick up the key and try it in the locked door. Maybe there's treasure on the other side or maybe there's a hungry monster.

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OMNICRON CONSPIRACY™
Image Works/First Star Software

As a Star Police Captain, it's your job to keep the peace in the Universe – OMNICRON is bogglingly complex. Search everything, search everywhere. And don't take no for an answer!

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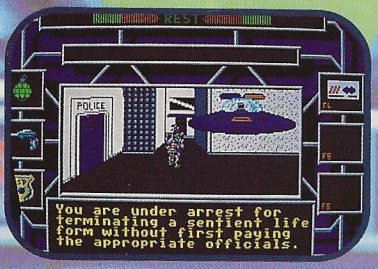

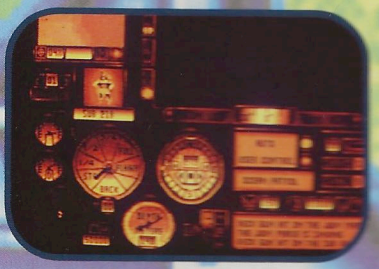

WOLFPACK™
Mirrorsoft/Novalogic

Take charge of either Allied destroyers or German U-Boats in this classic simulation of war at sea. With seven period scenarios, as well as a full construction set. WOLFPACK lets you examine any aspect of North Atlantic naval warfare throughout the 1939-45 conflict. WOLFPACK is the most sophisticated submarine surface simulation EVER!

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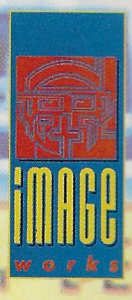
FTL™ TM



Spectrum HoloByte™

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Mirrorsoft Ltd Irwin House 118 Southwark Street London SE1 0SW Tel: 01-928 1454 Fax: 01-583 3494

Contents

Psst... **Page 2**
Back from his recent hospitalisation, T.R. is on form again with a look into his crystal ball at what the next decade holds for the computer industry.

Psst... Mark II **Page 2**
Meanwhile, downstairs, the Official Secrets office has moved into a bigger office and quite a few problems with time. John Knight explains how he isn't going to cope when all the Christmas adventure releases appear!

Top Secret - - - Do Not Read **Page 3**
The News File rises from the depths again and also gains an extra page to cover all the pre-Christmas hype and tripe as seen at the Personal Computer Show.

The Hound of Shadow **Page 6**
Something is slithering its way out of the disk drive in this 1920's Cthulhu horror. Role-playing taking a front seat at last! Agent Trevillian gets his teeth into this shaggy dog story and finds that the 20's were certainly 'roaring'!

Level 9 - Exclusive News **Page 9**
When we heard the rumours that Level 9 had decided to discontinue writing text adventures, we decided to forget the gossip and get Pete Austin, head of Level 9, to tell us why!

The Kingdom of Kerovnia **Page 10**
After the rave response from our critics on the Zork histories, here comes a sequel on the phantastical realms in Magnetic Scrolls' games. While perhaps not as complete as the Infocom universe, it does provide a unique experience for anyone trying to make sense of the crazy Kerovnian kingdom!

Hero's Quest **Page 12**
You'll need big stockings to fit inside all the Sierra releases this Christmas as they send us a few newies, a few oldies and a lot of goodies. I'm sure this is just a ploy so that we cannot fit them all in the News File...

Lyons in Russia **Page 14**
The concluding part of Jacqui Lyons topical look at the computer industry in the Glasnost of Moscow. This time, she ends her visit with some good, old-fashioned Russian hospitality.

Pop Star **Page 16**
Well, we couldn't hold him back when this play-by-mail game arrived in the office... John Knight launches himself into international stardom with the help of Kylie Minogue, a vacuum cleaner and a rolled-up copy of Confidential!

Personnel File **Page 18**
Agent Kent joined the Team for a week and ended up penning a few questions for our files. But who did he pick amidst the boundless galaxy of stars in the computer adventure world? Turn to Page 18 to find out!

Wolfpack **Page 20**
Submarine simulations are set to resurface in the new year with this exclusive look at Mirrorsoft's newest games in the pipeline.

Adventure '89 **Page 22**
How did it all go? What happened? Did the rain stop play? Pip Cordrey runs through the attractions at this gala event.

Dead Letter Box **Page 23**
Another batch of contacts on the member's Noticeboard.

Adventure Writing III **Page 24**
The last part of Sandra Sharkey's look at the way to writing your own adventures (and other topics). This Issue she concentrates on adventure 'freaks' and the process of getting your ideas sorted out.

DIY LRP **Page 26**
So you arrive at your own live role-playing venue and find that you've forgotten everything! Well, bring this Issue of Confidential along and you'll have no problems sorting out a first-rate adventure!

Bestiary File/Bixby **Page 29**
More creatures and cartoon craziness from the world of adventure monsters and Bixby's adventures on the other side of the screen!

Puzzle Page **Page 30**
Post-Wizard's Cottage depression has set in at the Confidential offices, but here is a large Christmas helping of conundrums to keep you busy over the holidays. Special prizes all round in our Three-In-One Competition!

Your Four Eyes Only! **Page 32**
The Man In Black opens another postbag and gets to grips with some frightening letters after last Issue's Horror Special.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Boss is back Upstairs and has mellowed enough to allow himself to thank the following people, without whom Confidential would be a myth : The Team, that is: John "How embarrassing!" Trevillian (being unable to think of anything to say about last Issue's exposé on his insurance claim form), Robert "Doppy Woolaf" Lockwood (for kidding around in the office) and, John "MegaStar" Knight (for getting within spitting distance of Kylie and not passing out in all the excitement).
And, of course, huge thanks to the Extra-Special Mentions, who this Issue are: Chris Elliott and Richard Edwards for their marvelous *Hound Of Shadow*, Pete Austin and all at Level 9 (Good Luck with your new plans - I hope they're *HUGE*!), Magnetic Scrolls' Paul Findley, Noirin Carmondy, for her help in finding the pub nearest to the Activision offices, Jacqui Lyons for her wonderful news of Russia, all the staff at Ideal Games, James Kent for being one of the team, Keith Campbell for being a good sport, Matthew Bottomley for his artwork and research on *Wolfpack*, Pip Cordrey and the *MirrorWorld* team, Sandra Sharkey and, once again, the woman everyone wants to woo, Vera "There's a lot of new people on the Tea List this week" Sawyer, homicidal Home-help and alien ruler of the planet Pheebe.

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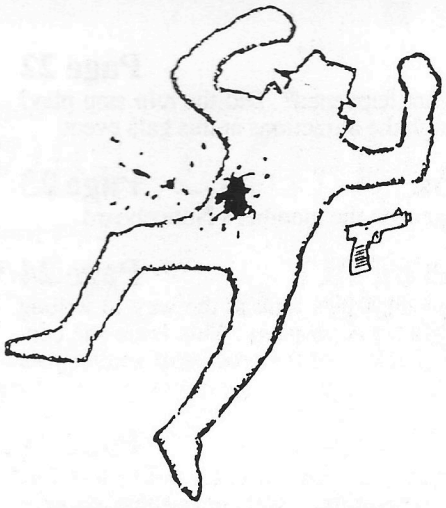
...WELL, IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK IN THE OFFICE AGAIN... TIME TO CRACK A FEW FEET AND PUT OUR BEST WHIPS FORWARD... ERM... I THINK...

Psst... A WORD FROM THE BOSS UPSTAIRS



"QUE SERA SERA, WHATEVER WILL BE WILL BE, THE FUTURE'S NOT OURS TO SEE, QUE SERA SERA."

This year as Christmas fades away the World will witness the dawning of the 200th decade Anno Domini. To me the 80's represent the arrival of the Personal Computer, the arrival of Junk Mail and the arrival of the Greens. It's possible that Junk Mail has peaked in the 80's, as more and more of it is automatically dumped in the bin without more than a glance, and as the public learn that it's not too clever to claim a colour TV set as a prize in return for being conned into buying a time-share apartment in Iran. If the Greens have any say the cost of paper will go up sufficiently to nail down the lid on the Junk Mail era.

But the personal computer is here to stay. Regardless of whether you are one of those who welcome its arrival, or one of the majority who don't, you must know that just like the television or the pneumatic tyre, it's here for evermore, or until we all perish in the final flood. A few years ago I would have said the final explosion, but with the arrival of Gorby and the conversion of Kinnock, the CND movement has dropped it's banners and turned a more popular shade of Green, alerting us now to the prospect of irreversible doom, rather than instant annihilation.

As ever, predicting the future is interesting because it's a challenge and because it draws our attention to present issues. It's far more fun making New Year Predictions than it is making New Year Resolutions, which nobody remembers the next day. But despite the pace of technology man is less able to predict change in the next decade than he has ever been before, and ironically it is the pace of change in technology that makes him less sure of his forecast.

"Chaos" is an expression we tend to use when everything is going wrong. It's also a big word for the 1990's when it will be better used to describe an unpredictable chain of events. You'll hear a lot about "Chaos" as men use computers to calculate a trillion variables to forecast anything from the rise of the sea to the rise of the stock markets, and how they affect each other, and which is most important to mankind. It's worth pointing out that our ability to manipulate information is improving at about Warp 16. The mathematics go something like 2 - 4 - 16 - 256 - 65,536 - 4,294,967,296 - when we talk about 8-bit, 16-bit, 32-bit, etc.

Chaos is my prediction for the nineties. You can create it simply by trying to predict a chaotic pattern of events. For example: everybody knows that it takes years to make any fundamental change in the economy of most countries, it's a very slow process. But the stock market and the money markets, in trying to predict the economics of the future (what to be in and what to be out of) manage to kick the economy all over the place. Our ability to manipulate information and communicate the results to the whole World within seconds, could lead us into chaos. Let's hope that we can learn to manipulate our Information without the Technology manipulating us.

What will be will be prevented!

THE PHILOSOPHER UPSTAIRS

JOHN KNIGHT'S A Little Psst... Downstairs

Boy oh boy, have I been busy! We all have really, but I was told to get all my work written and typed up in one day. I had to sacrifice everything; my meeting with Elvira, a dinner date with Kylie, it just was not good enough! But, by some miracle I finished it on time. We would all like to thank you for putting up with us over the past few weeks as all the offices and phone systems have been moved around, causing absolute chaos. There are even rumours that The Boss has been onto British Telecom about putting portable 'phones in the loos! Where would we like them? Behind the door? Or under the loo roll?

Thanks to all the members who sent in solutions. This Issue's solutions draw winner is Mr. M. Shaw from Kent who sent in the first solution to Manhunter San Francisco. Don't forget that Official Secrets needs your help to keep our files up to date, so if you have completed any of the following games you may win a FREE game from our catalogue, so get those adventures written up. We need help on; *Rick Dangerous, Ooze, Darkside*, all parts to *Lord of The Rings, Prison, Golden Path, Krystal* and *Quest for the Time Bird*. Not much to ask for really!

Now, here is an offer you cannot refuse... We need people who are willing to write solutions for us. We will let you know which game to document and will also send you the game free, which you can keep once the solution has been completed. How does that sound? Please write to me at the Official Secrets address or phone on the Adventure Helpline stating your name and telephone number to me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs. June Atherton for all the support she has given the Helpline concerning the solution to *Bloodwych*. She has been getting calls from me nearly every evening because other members have needed help and we couldn't get the full solution until she got her printer down from the loft, so thanks a million! Well, the time has come when I bid you all goodbye until Issue 9. Don't forget to keep those solutions rolling in.

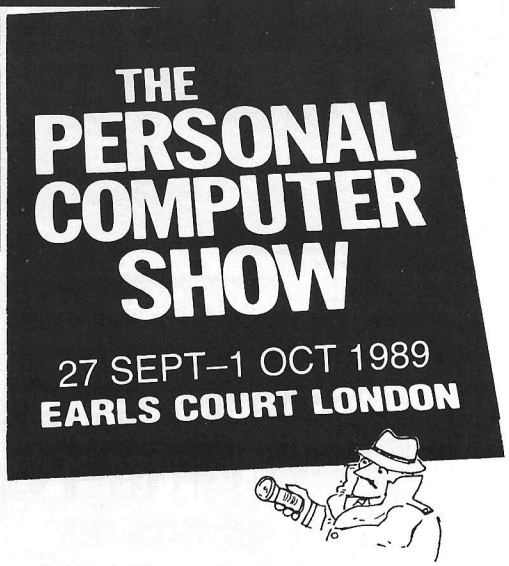
JOHN KNIGHT

...THE PC SHOW MAY NEVER APPEAR AGAIN... AND THERE'S NEWS OF EMAP PUTTING ON A SHOW FOR SOFTWARE... HMM... I WONDER...

RET NEWS - - - DO NOT READ - - - TOP SECRET NEWS - - - DO NO

AGENT ORANGE'S

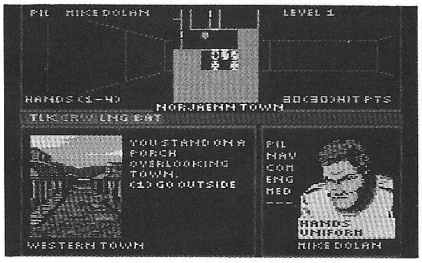
News File

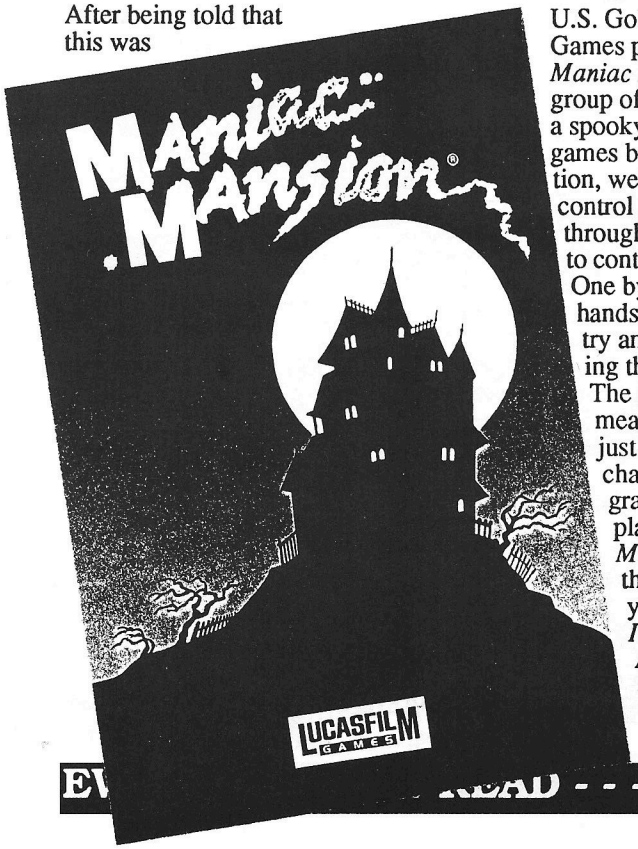


The PC Show may well be the last, at least in its present form. EMAP have just announced their nail in its coffin - the European Computer Entertainment Show will take place next September and will have no business software section at all. Perhaps the PC Show will become just a business and trade show? Well, I cannot say about that, but what I can tell you is that this year's Show certainly had a lot of goodies for us adventure, strategy and role-players. Read on and drool...

Well, there we were at the 1989 PC Show, London Olympia, which someone conveniently held exactly halfway between Confidential's two-monthly cycle. Each software house was battling to be the most eye-catching stand, and also to impress with the most expensive hardware they could find. In my view, the most attractive and expensive-looking stand must have been from Ocean Software. In an amusement arcade-style layout, video machines lined all the walls. Their games were able to be played in the traditional way and didn't need to rely on Amigas or STs. The other reason I spent my time here was because the machines didn't eat up your ten pences, it was all free!

After being told that this was meant to be an educational trip, I was dragged away to the TyneSoft stand. This was twice as much fun and pretty educational as the life-size pictures of Elvira, Mistress of the Dark, gave our tongues a good airing. But, despite all this, my day here was to collect all the latest news and reviews on new coming game releases. So here they are...

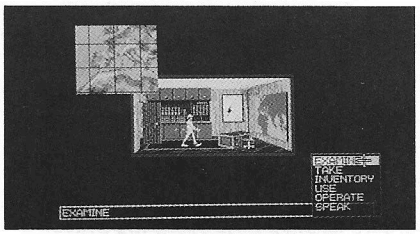




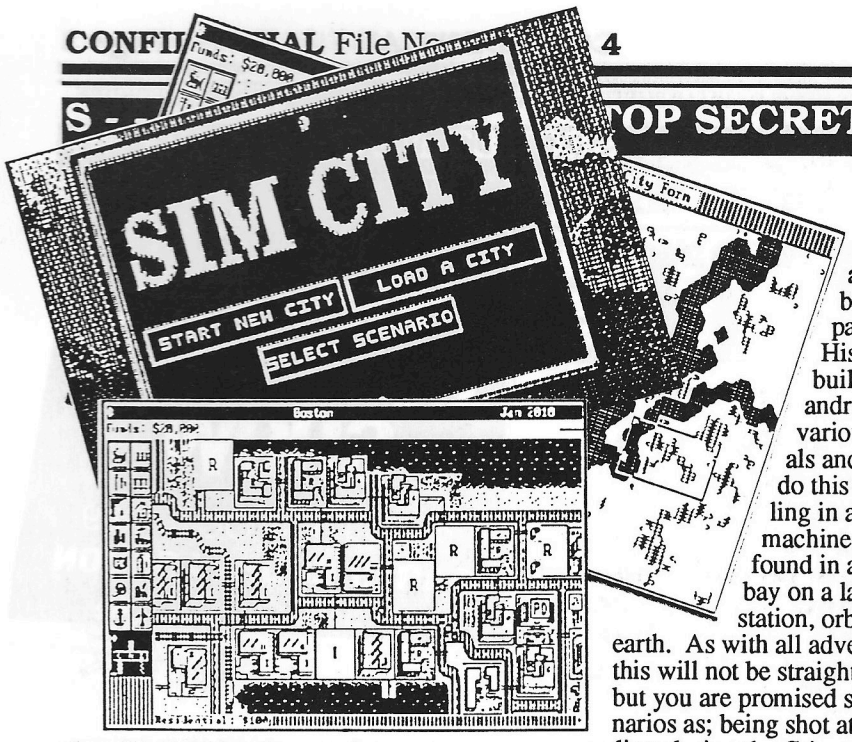
U.S. Gold on behalf of Lucasfilm Games presents a comedy thriller, *Maniac Mansion*. This involves a group of teenagers who decide to enter a spooky old house. Like all other games based in a spooky house situation, weird goings-on happen. You control a party of three teenagers and throughout the game you can switch to control either one at any time. One by one they fall into the evil hands of Professor Fred, who will try and prevent them from uncovering the mystery of the mansion. The game is icon-driven which means there is no need to type, just point 'n' click to select your characters and objects. Rich in graphical detail with a variety of play options, makes *Maniac Mansion* a worthy addition to the other Lucasfilm titles. If you liked *Neuromancer* and *Indy*, you'll recognise this. Available soon on the following formats; Amiga, ST, C64 Disk and IBM PC.

As ever, Electronic Arts are not resting on their laurels. The latest news from them is that they have three new games on the cards for release; *Dragon Wars*, *Sentinel Worlds*, and *Populous* on the PC. *Dragon Wars* is their new role-playing game, designed and written by Interplay. The setting is the hot summer in the small town of Oceana. Your quest takes you on an epic sea journey, where fall foul of the evil King Drake of Phoebus, ruler of Purgatory, who intends to conquer the surrounding islands. The dragons of the title are used to battle King Drake and hopefully thwart his ideas of world domination. The game allows the player to choose the level of combat that will suit them best, to determine the power of their player and to select tactics of ranged combat. Characters created from *Bard's Tale I*, *II* and *III* can be transferred into the game, which is also in addition to the features of 'pop-up' windows and an automapping mode, allowing all the mapping to be done on the screen without the traditional graph paper and pens. *Dragon Wars* will be available in late December on the C64 disk (EA promise other formats next year).

Again for the C64, *Sentinel Worlds* is due for release about the same time. This is a science fiction role-playing game, hoping to prove that you can create characters on a computer that are as deep as those in books, while



EV... READ - - - TOP SECRET NEWS - - - DO NOT REA



also allowing the player to interact with non-playing characters. You must build up a team of five players, taking them into a three-planet solar system which is constantly being attacked by unknown sources. Your future on the mission will depend on your team's strategy and training program.

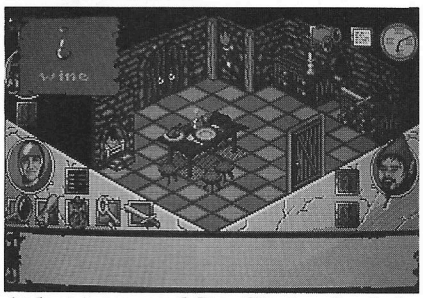
Electronic Arts have announced the immediate release of *Populous* on the PC (both disk sizes). Selling over 70,000 units in and around Europe on the Amiga and ST formats, its sound has been enhanced for the PC and will support Hercules CGA, EGA and EGA formats. Play on your own, or connect with other IBM, Amiga or ST owners via a Null Modem cable (P.S. EA also asked me to pass on that *BattleChess* is out for the C64 too!).

When people mention the name Paul Cuisset, minds do not immediately recognise that this individual has anything to do with the world of adventures, but this may all change with the release of Delphine's *Future Wars : Time Travellers*. This combines the 3-D system loved by Sierra addicts, with some really classy graphics and a new approach to adventures. Three years in the making, Paul has taken the French market by storm and is getting quite a few pages in all the monthlies just about now here in the UK. Expect this to just squeeze in with the Christmas rush - and be prepared to be amazed!

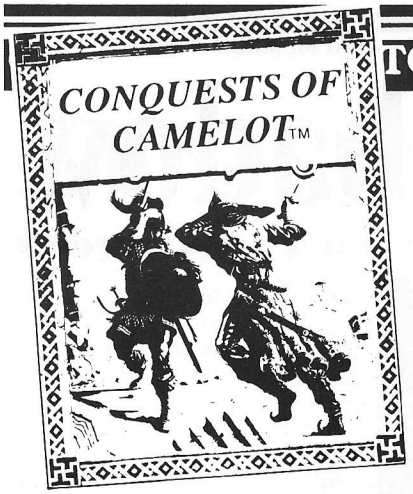
Travelling through time is currently very much in vogue, what with *Future Wars* and the *Chronoquest* series, and now *TIME* has joined the list (No this has nothing to do with last orders at the bar!). Here the player travels through an animated adventure back to the past worlds. His task is to build an android from various materials and he can do this by travelling in a time machine which is found in a loading bay on a large space station, orbiting the earth. As with all adventures, this will not be straight-forward, but you are promised such scenarios as; being shot at by soldiers during the Crimean war, chased by lions in the circus Maximus in Rome, set-upon by the model for the Mona Lisa and taught magic by Merlin the Wizard. The game boasts over one hundred graphical locations and sixty different characters in the game you can interact with. This is run with icon driven controls, giving the player a chance to concentrate more on solving the game, not using it!

Test your trading and space mining skills on the new game, *Emperor Of The Mines* soon to be out from Impressions. In this 'real-time' wargame, you are challenged with twenty different missions, each consisting of challenging puzzles which you have to overcome. They say that this also includes sampled sound speech and a vast play area and combat mode, but as they didn't send us a review copy, who can say!

This winter, Imageworks are releasing the long awaited *Final Battle : Legend Of The Sword II*. As you are the hero, it's your task to escape from the dungeon cell you are in, in the castle Anar, then rescue your fellow companions who are also being held capture by the evil wizard Suzar. After escaping the dungeons you must follow Suzar and get back the sword and shield which he stole and destroy him forever. The unique features of the game include; a large range of character statistics, a comprehensive weather system which will cover all the climate changes as you progress through your quest and 3-D views of every location you visit. All I can say is that if it is an innovative as *LOTS I*, it should be well worth a look!



At last, a copy of *Sim City* has landed on my desk! Ever since playing *Populous* and hearing that there was a city simulator that was coming along, I was on the edge of my seat. The program is really a system simulation, where you get a system of rules and apply them to a problem. Here the problem is creating your dream city. You are in control and can plan, build, destroy and manage your own urban nightmare, which even includes simulated people who complain whenever you put their taxes up! All viewed in glorious graphics, this complex piece of multi-tasking is brought to you by Infogrames - and I haven't had a chance to really get my teeth



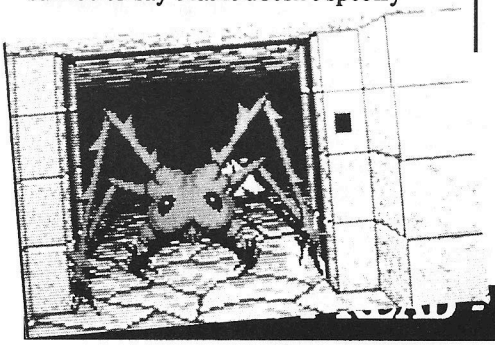
TOP SECRET NEWS - - - DO NOT READ - - - TOP

into it yet - so more news to follow.

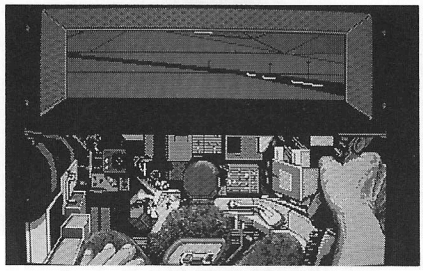
For an in-depth look at Sierra's Christmas releases, turn to page 12, but the one that got away for Xmas is *Conquests of Camelot*. This game looks very much like an Arthurian flavoured King's Quest at first glance, but, like Infocom's *King Arthur* and Level 9's *Lancelot*, the tales of the Round Table do make wonderful storylines for computer games. They have strong plots, richly portrayed scenes and well-known characters that translate well to the small screen. It's still a pity that Sierra call this 'historically accurate' though - as this bears little resemblance to anything other than the romanticised image of the Court of Camelot. Still, this retelling of the search for the Holy Grail is definitely one to watch out for.

At the PC Show, US Gold were raving about the imminent releases of the *AD&D* range for the ST and Amiga, shouting things like 'Shock Horror Story : *Pool of Radiance* and *Hillsfar* out before Christmas!' and 'Dragons of Flame out soon - Ignore this news at your peril'. Never one to let a good bit of hysteria get me excited, I ignored the whole thing and have now heard that these release dates are void - expect them sometime in 1990. Ç'est la vie!

And while on the subject of of slipping release dates: Did you know that *Chaos Strikes Back* has held the date of November 23rd for three weeks on the Release Schedule? Will it be out as you read these words? Who knows, suffice to say that it doesn't specify which year they are talking about. I can see it all now. It's April 1st 1990 and we receive a press release from Mirrorsoft which is headlined "FTL announce biggest April Fool ever! *Chaos Strikes Back* yet to be started". I have a lynch mob ready.



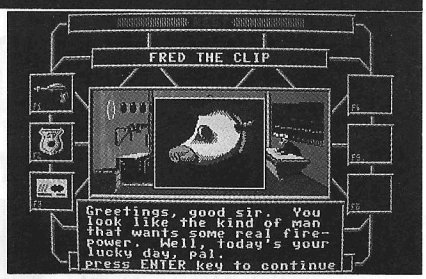
And while we have the Mirrorsoft file wedged open, I see that the *Omnicron Conspiracy* should be out for the Christmas break - and it looks like it could be interesting. A complete amalgam of quite a few of the other adventuring styles, it looks from the screen shots to be very much like an ICOM-style game (in the mould of *Shadowgate, Uninvited,* etc.), but the story is... how can I put this?... Well, weird would be the word, but this is a slur on weird things. Perhaps zany is more correct. Any story that sur-



rounds such unlikely-sounding characters as Betty the Body and the infamous Fred the Clip, has got to be a little strange, and the fact that you are cruising around the galaxy with this evil guy on your tail, promising to turn you into an artichoke with his Death Ray, does not help me to adequately explain what this is all about! More details to follow? Maybe...

On the simulation front, Microprose have a whole pack of new releases planned for the near future. In the air there is *Rat Pack*, the action-packed successor of *Airborne Ranger*, where you are placed at the head of a four man team which can them be used to carry out missions across the enemy lines. In the water look out for *Red Storm Rising* conversions on the Amiga and the ST, the tactical and strategic submarine simulation based upon Tom Clancy's novel of the same name (this sounds like a movie trailer!). On the ground watch for *M1 Tank Platoon*, and no prizes for guessing what this is a simulation of! In an enormous battle zone, with sixteen different positions to play from and a complete set of changing orders, this looks like another winning strategy game for Microprose freaks.

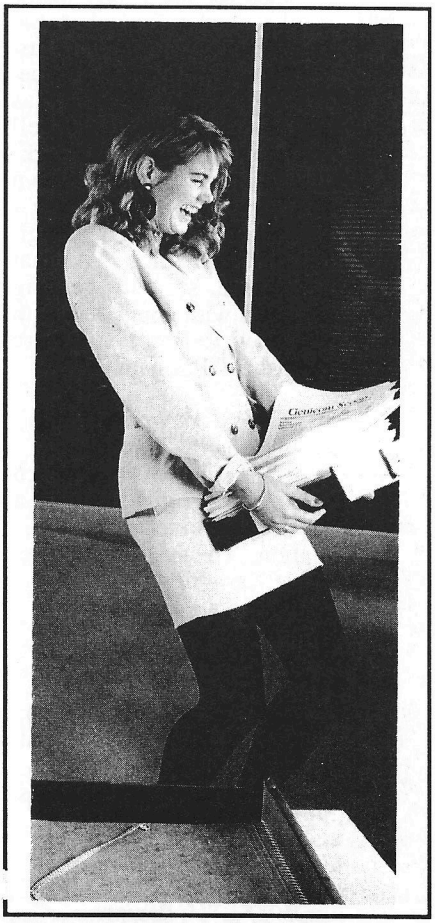
And last on the list this Issue is the *Universal Military Simulator II*. This is a little down the line for Microprose,



but it looks as if the original *UMS* has gone in for a complete overhaul. Additions include the increasing of units pre side, from 60 to 16,000, the fact that 127 players (computer or human) can play at once, and the addition of huge numbers of provinces and units all battling for world domination. Definitely a shot in the arm for all wargamers out there who can't afford 32,000 lead figures!

AGENT ORANGE.

(Oh, I almost forgot to mention Amanda Barry - well, after Agent Trevillian's trip to Activision, the reports are that Amanda is currently too busy to speak with us about her recent earring fame, as she is finding she hasn't even enough time to deal with all her fan mail on the subject (picture inset)! Okay, Amanda, we get the message... We won't mention your ear--- erm, your latest fashion accessories again, just so long as you keep us informed about all the latest Activision releases!)



...A LITTLE LATE FOR THE HORROR SPECIAL ISSUE... YES, I KNOW IT IS... LOOK, DON'T TRY ALL THAT MUMBO-JUMBO WITH ME...

The Hound Of Shadow

A DISTURBING INTERVIEW INTO THE OCCULT FROM

RE=Richard Edwards
CE=Chris Elliott
JT=John Trevillian

JT : How did the idea of *The Hound Of Shadow* come about?

CE : Once upon a time... (laughs). It all started something like three years ago. We had been doing a *Call of Cthulhu* scenario for Games Workshop, called *Statue Of The Sorcerer*, and at that time we were thinking of doing a sequel. It was all sparked off when Lee Gibbons, who is the artist who did the SotS and THos covers, mentioned about Black Dogs in East Anglia. In chatting about that we got the idea for the cover, which is of a man reflected in the dog's eye, so now it was just a question of doing the game. The initial idea of doing it as a role-playing scenario fell apart because Games Workshop stopped doing their own *CoC* stuff in this country - and stopped producing original material for it. At that stage we started getting involved with computers with the now defunct software publishers, Ramjam.

RE : We were working on a bog-standard adventure called *Shadow Warrior* which was a sort of ninja attack on a castle; very much like a simulation. The system we were using was written by Trevor Toms and was called *The Biro*, because it's one better than *The Quill*!

CE : It was Trevor who picked himself up out of the wreckage and said he was going to carry on developing adventures, so we got together with him and started to customise his system... Well, customising isn't quite strong enough. What we did was take his basic utility and radically redesigned the way that it operated. It's not so much the way it does it, it's what you get at the end of it. The basic routines still come down to the parser, flags, counters, etc., but that's like saying that books all come down the the same twenty-six letters of the alphabet - it's what you do with them that counts. So we sat down with Trevor and redesigned the system to implement ideas that we had been having for a computer role-playing system, which became *Timeline*. We didn't approach it from the computer side, but from the role-playing side. Trevor was quite happy with that, because basically he saw that if he did it, he would look at it from a programmer's point of view. You see we had the expertise to create the system and the sheer blind optimistic ignorance which said: 'Why the hell can't we do it this way? Who says so?'

RE : When we got Carl Cropley to do the graphics, we said could he do them in sepia, not thinking for a moment that wouldn't translate onto a PC CGA mode. We didn't think of that. We just thought let's do it in sepia on the Amiga and then port it across. It looks brilliant on an Amiga and ST, but on a PC, it looks bleugh!

JT : What got you into Cthulhu originally?

CE : I'm the main Cthulhu fan. I've always liked the Lovecraft stuff, in spite of the fact that he is in some ways an awful writer.

RE : Everything ends in italics with three dots after it, like "...it is scratching at the door now even as I dip my pen in the inkwell... Aaaaarrrggghhh!!!

CE : "...Hold on I haven't quite finished the last line...Aaaaarrrggghhh!!!" It's amazing that as they are dragged off they can always write "Aaaaarrrggghhh!!! ". But the point is, if you look at Lovecraft's books, and look at the other mythos authors - people like August Derleth - they just aren't the same. However bad they were as hack-pulp writers, Lovecraft still had something that nobody else had.

RE : The whole thing about *CoC* - the thing that attracted us rather than fantasy - was that it was set in the real world; you could incorporate real things into the game and effectively make it into a hoax.

JT : What is the story of THoS?

CE : Well, we don't want to give too much away as it unfolds naturally as you play. Effectively what we decided to do was write a new story for the Cthulhu mythos, but to do it on a new medium - on a computer. What we did was to get a storyline and then try to embroider it with as much fact as possible. You start off in London in the 1920's and, depending on your profession, you have a different reason for being there. What happens next is that you are booked up to go to a seance with a friend and, once there, the medium, who appears to be a cheap fraud, suddenly becomes possessed and gives out a strange message to a young man at the seance. The voice is that of a woman and your friend recognises it because they met her before in fairly unpleasant circumstances and do not wish to be reminded of it. And the message is: 'The Hound

is upon you and you bear his mark!

THE COMPUTER MASTERS OF LOVECRAFTIAN HORROR

ow is upon you and you bear his mark.' Now at that point, your friend wants to start investigating this and they enlist your help. You then start your research in the British Museum reading rooms and the whole thing unravels from there. To say too much more would be to give things away. In game terms, the seance is like an extended pre-credit sequence designed to ease you into the plot before you are left on your own.

RE : You are helped through it by your friend. He's not there as a Thorrin who sits down and sings about gold constantly, he actually does things, like helping you in your research in the museum and that sort of thing. Your friend can be either male or a female, based on your sex, because mixed sexes in those days were frowned upon. He or she helps you through the research and explains the process of doing things - if you have seen the British Museum reading rooms you will know how confusing it is in reality -

CE : Picking up on that; when we were writing the game, we went up to the British Museum and were doing a lot of research there and we wrote a lot of that into the game. A lot of the articlesyou come across in the game are the articles we came across in our research. After all, it's a genuine location; it works the same way now as it essentially worked in the 20's, so why not have real books too? We used things that were there to give the game much more of a feel of authenticity.

RE : You will get the impression when you are playing that you are actually delving through old books, which is a different kind of game rather than just running around shooting things.

CE : Plotwise it's obviously dealing with the occult, but what we wanted was to get a feeling of it being a simulation, so what we've concentrated on is atmosphere, characterisation and interaction.When you do things in the game, we have tried to give the feeling that you are interacting with people, that things happen as they would do in real life.

RE : If you annoy people, they stay annoyed. If you miss appointments, your friend writes you rude letters saying 'Where were you?'.

JT : How does time progress once you are playing the game?

RE : Part of *Timeline* is that there will be a series, which can be played in any order and will wrap around you, so if you play the first game and it ends on, say, 15th June 1924, when you get the next game time will carry on from that. Now if you bought the second game first, then play the first game, it will carry on that way as well. So for you, the order is the other way round.

CE : It's like, if you've got a series of role-playing scenarios, the referee doesn't say 'Ah, sorry, this one's number 3 in the series and this one's number four, and we played number four, so we can't play number three', they just rearrange them. The character is central. It's a natural way of dealing with time and avoids statements like 'You have four turns to find something to eat or else you drop dead'.

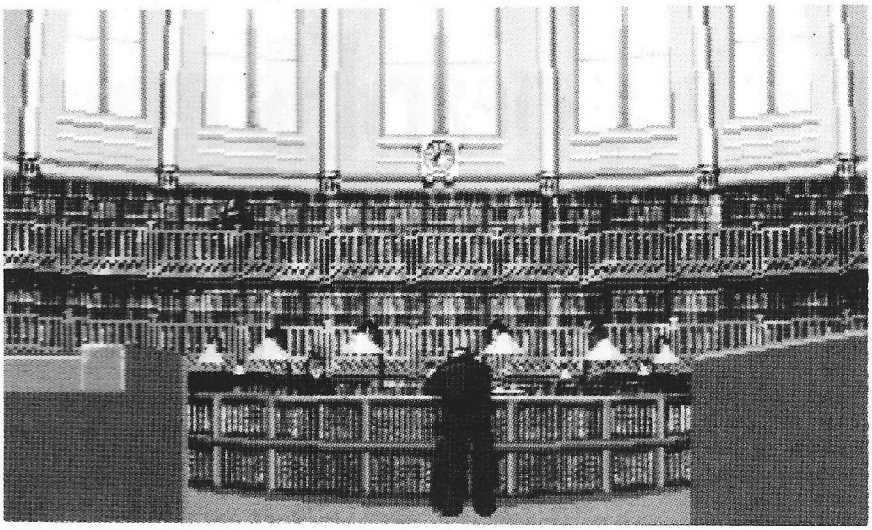
JT : Who do you think the game will appeal to?

CE : It's going to appeal to people who enjoy role-playing, but haven't enjoyed computer role-playing games before now. A lot of computer role-playing stuff has been very graphically orientated...

JT : Basically at the beginning it gives you the choice of playing a dwarf or an elf...

CE : That's right and if you are used to tabletop role-playing between a group of people, you are going to miss the dialogue between people, that you get events elaborated and so forth. So I hope that people who enjoy role-playing, but haven't found anything similar on computers will play this and say "Yes, it's not the same as real life role-playing, but it's got bits that I like together with bits that you can only do on a computer. I also hope that a lot of people who have not played adventures before, because they don't like certain things about them, will find that those things aren't in the game. The sort of things that I am thinking about are: adventures are essentially puzzles, they are about object collection and manipulation and problem solving, and typically if you don't get something right, then you hit a brick wall. For example, you cannot get past the landslide until you've got the crowbar. Sometimes they can be really brutal about it - the classic example in one game is you had to open some sluice gates and to do this you had to input the command 'LUBRICATE MECHANISM. Nothing else would do. And I wouldn't like to guess the number of people who never get far with adventures just because they get fed up with having to do things a certain way.

RE : Another thing is that I've played adventure games where to get in your



front door, you have to GET KEY, UNLOCK DOOR WITH KEY, OPEN DOOR and GO IN. To me I find that irritating. If I want to get into my house, I automatically do everything. In a lot of the earlier adventures, the puzzle was the thing and to get through the door was the puzzle. I'm much more interested in what you see once the door is open! To me, that's the reason I am playing the game. So in THoS, we don't have puzzles, we have problems.

CE : That's the distinction basically. The game is about problems, because the people in THoS have major problems, like they are going to die if they don't get things sorted out! And when you've got that sort of problem, it's not really adding anything to the game to say to people 'Aha, you can't do this, unless you do it exactly that way!'. We've got rid of that and tried to encourage people to interact. There is a tendency with computer games software to assume that everybody who is going out and buying stuff is either heavily into flight simulators or is the proverbial spotty fourteen-year-old with long greasy hair that is only interested in shoot-'em-ups.

RE : Well there goes our sales to fourteen-year-olds!

CE : It's just a stereo-type obviously. We used to get this when we were involved in role-playing games. There was this dismissive attitude of 'Oh they're all munchkins", but we always felt that 'munchkin' was an attitude of mind rather than a function of age. It's the same with computer games, you get some people who will never want anything more than something that allows them to shut their brain off for a couple of hours.

JT : Last week someone rang to say that they had seen the picture of me and Elvira and wanted to congratulate me for glamorising the world of adventures. It isn't a glamorous area. To say that you play adventures - or even role-playing games - still isn't something that everyone feels comfortable telling people.

CE : It's because we have stereotypes. People think that everybody who plays role-playing games dresses up in funny costumes and wears pointed ears...

JT : But I think that it's coming of age. When I was growing up all the toys I had were based on war, like *Action Man*, but now children are growing up with *Masters Of The Universe* and that sort of thing.

CE : One thing we want to try and do is to put games onto computers with a strong role-playing element.

RE : A lot of people's definition of a role-playing game is one with a little stick man with numbers down the side, which isn't really anything to do with role-playing. I've heard *Gauntlet* called a role-playing game.

CE : The trouble is that role-players tend to look at something like *Gauntlet* and say 'Call that a role-playing game... Pah!' and computer gamers tend to look at role-playing games and say 'My god, you've got to read your way through five hefty rulebooks before you even start playing the game. Forget it.' They prefer stuff you can just stick in the drive and it plays itself.

RE : They also get stuck in the trap of seeing numbers and statistics and they say 'Oh, these are the algorithms that they use!' and then put them in. What we've done is used those algorithms, but we've hidden all the numbers. In THoS, when your character is created, he or she is described to you as being tall, good-looking, well-educated or whatever, but there are no numbers.

JT : They have numbers because they have come from a wargaming background, where everything has tables.

RE : Have you ever played Paranoia, because that has no numbers? The gamesmaster plays a computer who has all the fun killing off the other players in spectacularly funny ways. Everyone else hates it!

JT : I had it explained to me once by a very frenetic individual who said something like: 'Suddenly I put this powered armour on and pressed this button, marked 'DO NOT PRESS THIS BUTTON' and I shot upwards thirteen levels through the ceiling and then exploded and then all my clones ran in and it all went totally insane!' As if it wasn't already insane enough!

RE : Yes, well that game has no numbers - well, it does have numbers, but if you ask to see them they shoot you, so you learn not to ask.

CE : We have written THoS as a certain sort of role-playing game. It is very much a narrative approach leaning heavily towards character and atmosphere. What we would also like to do is to make role-playing games more accessible to people, by saying 'Ok, if you've been baffled by the books, the tables and the whole process, here it is on computer.' The computer does all the work. And like a role-playing referee, it helps you roll up your characters, it nurses you through the game, it does everything. And who knows, it may encourage people to start tabletop role-playing.

JT : What are you going to be doing once this one is finished?

CE : It will hopefully be called *The Book of the Serpent Staff*, and it takes place in Egypt around Cairo and Alexandria.

RE : But it's guaranteed 'Mummy Free', there are no pyramids in it and it does not contain anything that has rested in peace for two thousand years and has now been let loose on the population! It's a definite cliché-free zone.

CE : Well, we might have mummies in there, but its not going to be the typical 'You break open the Tomb and let loose the Curse of... whoever.'

JT : So is this because you've been hanging around the British Museum and you want to fly off to Cairo to do your research this time?

CE : Well we can try to convince Electronic Arts that we need to do some in-depth research... At least it's hot and sunny...

* * * *

...ALL THIS TALK ABOUT LEVEL 9 QUITTING ADVENTURES IS GETTING A BIT MUCH... NO ONE SEEMS TO SAY WHY... PERHAPS NO ONE'S ASKED...

PETE AUSTIN talks to Official Secrets about

THE FUTURE OF LEVEL 9

The question we posed Pete Austin was: "Why is *Scapeghost* the last of the text adventures for Level 9?"

"Level 9 computing was formed in 1981, with £60 and a Nascom Z80-based computer. Our first products were an 'Extension Basic' utility and a satirical FRP called *Fantasy,* but it was not long before we produced the first Level 9 adventure. It is difficult to remember how challenging adventure writing seemed in those days. Everybody knew that you could put simple 'Space-Invaders' style arcade games on micros, but the only adventure that we had seen were immense *FORTRAN* programs on mainframes. However, the genre seemed such fun that it deserved to get to a wider public. Compression of both text and program would be needed to squash an adventure down - it made little sense to do this work for a single game - so we needed an adventure system. Mike produced the original A-code and we set out to produce a few games using it. This was a time when new computers were sprouting like weeds, and they all needed games. It was relatively easy to transport A-code onto new machines (compared to writing games from scratch) and so Level 9 adventures were soon available on almost everything.

"From this point on, Level 9 were committed to text adventures. If we produced a different type of game, you see, it could be sold on one micro; whereas any new adventure could be sold on nearly every format. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy adventures and like writing them, but we would probably have gone on producing them anyway because it made no commercial sense to do anything else.

"End of flashback. The first Level 9 game was produced in 1981, and since then we have produced about sixteen adventures, not including trilogies and multiple-choice games. But Level 9's adventure sales have been declining gently for around three or four years now. Why do I think this is?
(i) Stability of hardware. In the early 1980's, the pace of hardware advance meant you could bet on one or two big new machines being launched every year. Each new micro was a great boost to Level 9; we only had to port A-code to be in there first, with a clutch of proven games. And the owners of new micros actually bought their games, as there were no longer-term owners to borrow them from. But nowadays, the only new computers seem to be IBM PC clones and our advantage is gone.
(ii) The original adventure market has fragmented into RPG's of all kinds, animated Sierra-style games, "movie-soft" game collections, arcade adventures and so on. Inevitably, they have all taken sales from the core adventure market.
(iii) Budget games. The mainstream 8-bit market seems to be almost entirely budget and licensed product (this is what High Street shops stock). Level 9 cannot afford to sell games at a budget price, and had just had to accept a steep cut in 8-bit sales.
(iv) World market. I believe that there is no longer a world market for traditional adventures (unless your name is *Infocom,* and even they have been widely reported to have had trouble). We have tried and failed to sell *Ingrid* and *Scapeghost* abroad, the universal reaction being that only animated adventures sell. It makes no commercial sense to produce games for the UK alone, when the competition can recoup their costs across the entire world and hence afford a bigger budget for programming, etc.
(v) There is an increasing risk in publishing each new game. In the early days, we could earn our bread and butter from mail-order sales. But now, almost all sales go through a small number of distributors, and eventually - if adventure sales continue to decline - they will refuse to stock a new game. If Level 9 got caught, we could suddenly find that our expected modest profit on a game became a £20K loss on launch costs alone.

"Other factors in Level 9's move away from adventures are:
(vi) Development costs are rising steadily. For example, 16-bit versions of *Scapeghost* have ten times as much text and twenty times as much game code as did *Colossal Adventure*. This is because: Level 9 games have three parts nowadays, people are now mobile and fairly realistic (*Colossal's* most complex NPC was a bear who growled until you fed him, and then followed blindly once unlocked. And that's all), most of the simple-to-code puzzles have been used quite enough already (anyone want to fill another lamp with oil, or make gunpowder from its ingredients again?), and games need novelty.
(vii) Finally. The cruncher is that the expected sales of new adventures are much less than the guaranteed (repeat, guaranteed) sales of Level 9's new-style games - let alone what we might make if one sells really big. (Mind you, we have invested a HUGE amount of unpaid work in system code).

"We will try to keep our existing games in stock, where we can and as long as people still buy a few. (BT seem to have allowed the Rainbird games - *Jewels of Darkness* , *Silicon Dreams* and *Knight Orc* - to go out of stock. We can't do anything about this until next summer, when I expect that Level 9 will get the rights back and can publish another batch). But as regards new games... Faced with declining sales and rising costs, it was inevitable that Level 9 would eventually have to turn away from traditional adventures and head towards the mainstream.

"Contractual secrecy prevents me saying much about Level 9's future games, except that they are 16-bit, with state-of-the-art animated graphics. (**Advert:** we have several good artists, but are looking for more, so why not send me a 16-bit demo disk? Level 9 pay profit-share bonuses on top of salary, give full credit to everyone who works on a game, and are definitely not a fly-by-night company. Advert ends - my apologies to non-artists). New games will also be adventure-ish, by which I mean that there will be much more meat in the plot department than is usual nowadays. For the rest, you will just have to wait and see!"

PETE AUSTIN

(Our thanks to Pete Austin for his time and trouble putting together this article).

...AGENT TREVILLIAN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THOSE HUNDREDS OF CARDS...KEROVNIA? WHAT DO YOU... OH NO, NOT AGAIN...

Lands of magic and mystery have always been a favourite place for adventurers to travel. And Kerovnia is no exception. Dreamt from the minds of those dark denizens of Magnetic Scrolls, this land has featured in two of their games and has left many followers eagerly awaiting a return to the bizarre stretches of the imagination that make it up (Footnote #1). It all started in *The Pawn*, where you are thrown headlong into a power struggle that surrounds the court of the King, being nothing more than a casual onlooker caught up in the political struggle for the throne. More nefarious activities were highlighted your second trip to Kerovnia in *The Guild Of Thieves*, where you are set the task of proving your legedermain in the fortified home of a holidaying baron and, basically, stealing all his treasures. So here is a look within the Encyclopedia Kerovnica (Footnote #2) at some of the strangeness and oddities of this phantastical realm in...

THE KINGDOM OF KEROVNIA

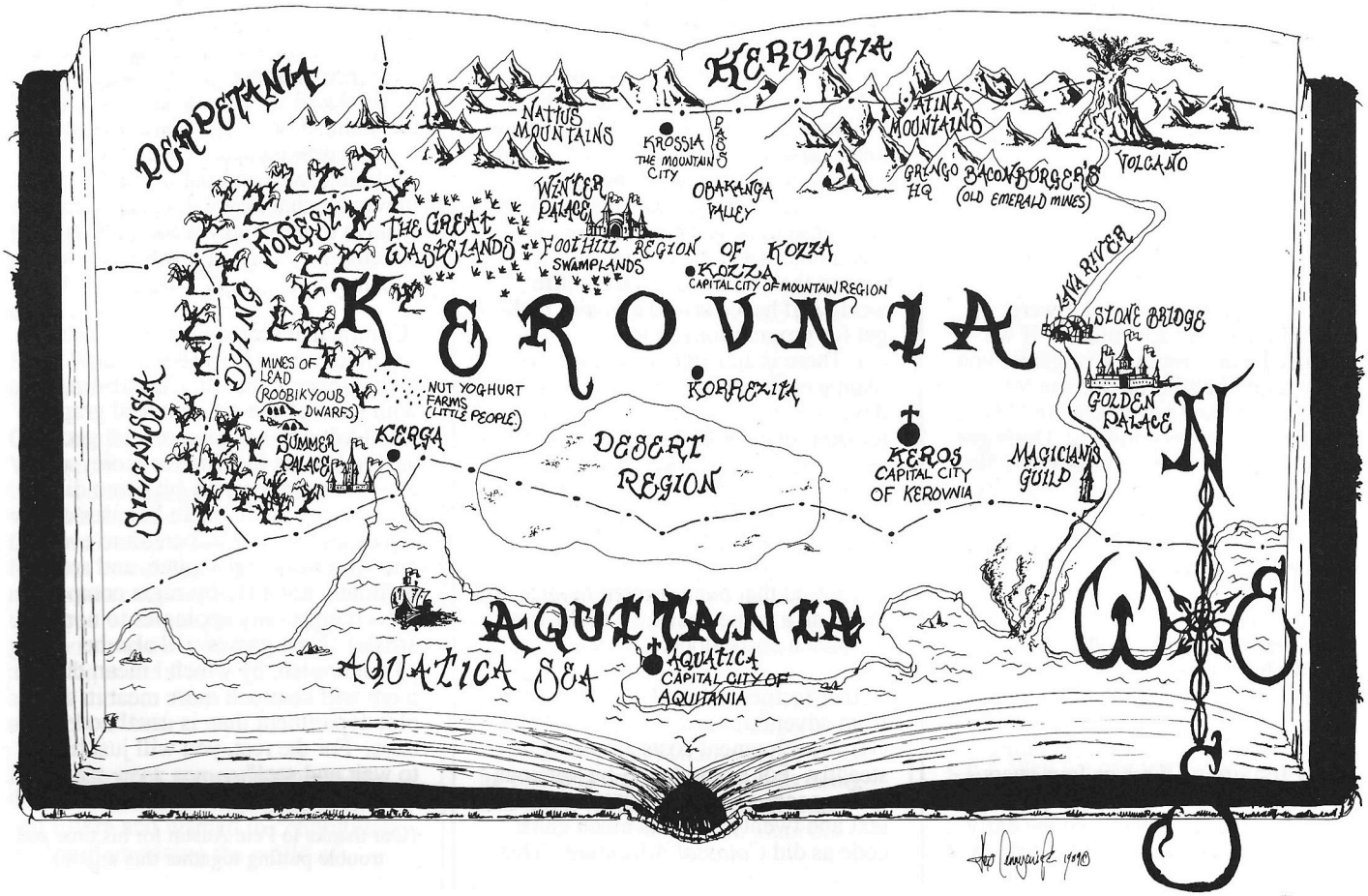
Preface

"Once upon a time (to coin a phrase) there was a fairy land called Kerovnia, ruled by King Erik and his Queen, Jendah II, which nestled cosily between the great Nattus mountain valley and the Aquatica Sea. Kerovnia was a million square miles, most of it forests. At the edge of these vast forests, stretching north to the mountains, and south to the inhospitable deserts, lay a host of farming communities..." (Footnote #3).

History

The Rule Of The Kings Of Kerovnia

One of the more easily explained of all the topics in Kerovnian history is the lineage of its Kings, though essentially this is due to the fact that they are all called Erik. Not a lot is known of the period before the original King Erik, yet as is hinted in Gringo Baconburger's autobiography, 'Gringo!', the reasons for this seem to be a vast cover-up operation on a scale hitherto unknown. Gringo's book is seen as one of the most authoratative of all the histories of Kerovnia, but some scholars throw scorn on its objectiveness. Starting with the rise of the Royal family and the establishment of the monarchy via murder and deception, it goes on to tell of the magnificent PR coups later performed which had each of the many peoples of Kerovnia thinking that the Royals were 'theirs'. Although much more detailed about the period when Gringo claimed a good deal of power himself, some of the 'facts' relating to this time seem too extraordinary to believe. Particularly the



account of the rise to the office of mayor of the strange 'legless' horse is very hard to credit. So here we are left to look back and wonder, for the history books are somewhat garbled to say the least and true hard facts are hard to come by (and even harder to believe when you eventually do come by them!). In true monarchic tradition, King Erik was followed by King Erik II, and he by King Erik III, all the way up until the present day, and our own glorious Highness, King Erik XV (Footnote #4).

Geography

The Kingdom of Kerovnia covers an area of one million square miles (to the inch) and within its boundaries lists an impressive range of climates and weather zones. Upon its northern boundaries (with the provinces of Perpetania and Kerulgia) runs a huge mountain region, split in the centre by the Obakanga Valley. The two resulting ranges are the Nattus and the Atina Mountains, to the west and east of the Obakanga respectively. To the south lies the thousand square miles of desert, caused by the fact that Aquitania, Kerovnia's southern neighbour, has all the water. To the western edge of the realm lies Silenissia, bordering on the vast reaches of the Dying Forest, which harbours the last remaining lead mines of the land. Here also lies The Great Wastelands, their threshold girthed by fetid swamplands and marshes of a size and depth that is (for the most part) immeasurable. The eastern edge of Kerovnia is split by the fiery molten expanse of the Lava River which issues from the northern Volcano, past the old emerald mines and Golden Palace, into a steaming heap within the Aquatica Sea.

With industires stemming from the enormous tracts of prime nut yoghurt farming land, the Kingdom of Kerovnia has much wealth and certainly has need of few imports from its neighbouring brothers. From chilly Kossa, the Mountain City of the north, to the warming fields of Kerga in the south, life is full of joy and happiness (Footnote #5). Other industries include emerald and lead mining, and tourism (especially in the beauty spots of the snow-capped regions of the north, when paths are not blocked by boulders (Footnote #6). Tourism in the realm is monopolised by the Dwarfs, while the Little People drew the short straw and got the nut yoghurt.

One problem with the geography of Kerovnia (Footnote #7), is that it keep changing; constantly. The explosion of the Volcano in the reign of King Erik I did catastrophic damage throughout the Kingdom and left its mark for many years to come. Things have come and gone, including changes in land masses (the emergence of the River Nasty that flows from a suddenly appearing northern sea late in King Erik XIV's reign), population densities (who knows where the fabled nomadic Swelks have gone to) and urban settlements (the famed disappearance of Kozza and appearance of Oftitch and it's unparalleled County Library [Footnote #8]).

Politics

A sore point in Kerovnia.

Flora & Fauna

Much of the flora of this extensive empire is little short of mundane, yet there are notable exceptions. Take for example the Swelk nomads, as described in the learned paper by Dr. Jenks,. entitled Methods Of Firewalking. It reads: "Strange as it may seem, the Swelk nomads, in the few seconds before their dazzling feats of firewalking, apply succulent Gerominitus on soles of their feet. This not only protects them completely, but also smells of hot marshmellows when toasted.' Yet, the subject of fauna is much more diverse:

Ice Constricting Snake
The only surviving specimen is kept in the Kerovnian Zoological And Botanical Gardens. Once predominant in the ice regions of the Kerovnian plateaus, they were all eliminated during the great thaw except 'Lawrence; who survived by hiding inside a giant snowman.

Pink Unicorns
These fabulous creatures are now indigenous to the Northern Mountains and usually used as sightseeing mounts by the droves of tourists that visit the region all year round. These unicorns were introduced by The Little People three centuries before the reign of King Erik I, when Faldous, the then King of Aquitania, gave the King of Kerovnia a red unicorn stallion as a birthday gift.

Kattish Dorabs
Dorabs are a cross between a rabbit and a dog. They are prized for their hunting abilities, but also make excellent pets. They have the body of a spaniel and the soft fur and droopy ears of a bunny. Loved by royalty, the most famous of all the world's (ever-increasing) population is Poops, pet and present on her sixteenth birthday.

Currency

The commonest form of currency is the Ferg. This comes in varying forms of denominations, the one, two and five Ferg coins being the most available. There are bank notes too and these usually depict famous figures in Kerovnia's history (usually Kings - as in the case of the 5 Ferg note which is printed with the head of King Randolph Ferg the Fearless). Due to the vast fluctuations in the Ferg's value, recent times have made it vertually useless, and barter throughout history has always been popular.

Footnote #1 : Of course, Jinxter took place in Aquitania, a neighbouring province to Kerovnia, but, for the sake of our own sanity in reconciling the whole history of the world, we shall not be touching upon that here.
Footnote #2 : A book that sits quite snugly between such other fashionable tomes as 101 Uses for A Dead Adventurer (a curious and macabre volume), Marks and Spenncerism Made Easy (by Professor Karl Friedrichs of the University Of Aquitania) and A Tale Of Kerovnia (a light fictional ramble, usually found with all the lines and words numbered on every page).
Footnote #3 : Taken from the opening paragraphs of 'A Tale Of Kerovnia'.
Footnote #4 : Who had an almost uncontrollable passion for fine walnut cabinets. These were fashioned by the finest carpenters in the land and almost wiped out the walnut tree population overnight (at least by the reckoning of the trees). Most walnut cabinets now in existence date from Erik XV period.
Footnote #5 : At least, that is the official report from the Palace, though it is a fair assumption that most of the poeples of Kerovnia do not have a say in this description onf the land. In a recent poll, 99% of all citizens of Kerovnia did indeed vote that they were rich, happy and pregnant, but these figures were collected solely from members of the King's Winter Palace in the Foothills of Kozza, whose only inhabitant was the Queen's favourite pink unicorn, who was in labour at the time, and the Queen, who wasn't. Due to this, Opinion Polls are therefore usually ignored for any accurate assessments of the populace's viewpoints - though not for up-to-the-minute Encyclopedias like this one (which are commissioned by Royal command).
Footnote #6 : Interestingly enough the abstract Kerovnian artist, Kweeley, founder of the neo-surrealist school, once captured such a scene in his remarkable adaptation, unimaginatively entitled 'Path Leading To Snow-capped Mountains'. It is such a pity that the actual title of the painting bears little resemblance to the blood-red splodges on the canvas.
Footnote #7 : One of the many problems with the geography of Kerovnia!
Footnote #8 : Suicides amongst cartographers are the highest in any profession in Kerovnia.

...I SEE THAT THE FLOOD GATES FOR ACTIVISION ARE JUST ABOUT TO START OPENING... LET'S SEE IF WE CAN FIT JUST A FEW OF THE SIERRA GAMES IN...

As Winter closes in around us and we start to think about getting a stocking big enough for Father Christmas to stuff computer games into, the time also arrives for the companies to think about what they are going to fill them with. Usually their resources are limited to maybe two or three new titles, but in the span of this Issue of Confidential, Sierra On-Line is conjuring up five completely new releases and three conversions of current titles. Quite a haul for Santa to deliver and certainly too many to include in the News File, so here we will highlight just what you can expect to be hanging on the Sierra Christmas Tree this year.

SIERRA ON-LINE LIBRARIES PRESENT:

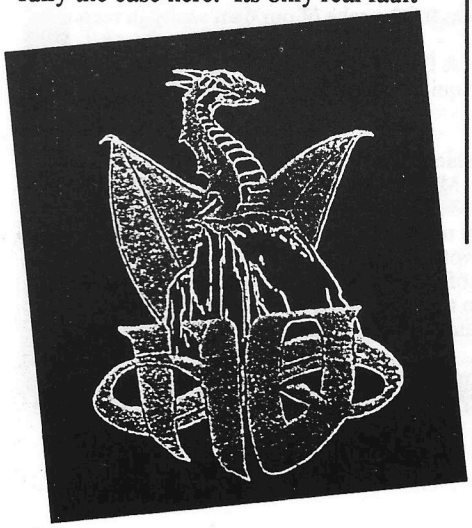
HOW TO BE A HERO

AND OTHER STORIES...

HERO'S QUEST

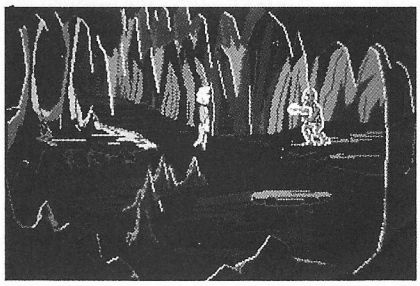
Well, let's start with potentially the most exciting of the new releases; *Hero's Quest*, subtitled 'So You Want To Be a Hero?' Here Sierra have decided that the role-playing bandwagon is something that they now have the time and the inclination to jump onto, but the question is: 'How successful is it?' It's a difficult question to answer, because it does depend upon what exactly you are looking for, or, indeed, what you are expecting.

The first thing you notice is that there are fourteen disks in the IBM version - ten 5.25" disks and four 3.5". This makes for a heavy box and will also push the price up a bit too. Yet the packaging is a little lighter and takes the form of a charming little booklet from the *Famous Adventurer's Correspondence School*. This tells you, in a jaunty and informative way, how you can become a hero and acts as a guide through the first stages of the game - a sort of rulebook disguised as an introduction to The Adventurer's Guild. It is amusing, well-written and, above all, looses nothing in the translation from American to English. Humour in the U.S. does not always survive crossing the Atlantic (a bit like Richard Branson's boats), but it seems that there is something transatlantic about role-playing, and this is thankfully the case here. Its only real fault is that it lacks a certain originality, as you get the feeling that you have read it all before. Covering such topics in its clichéd contents as What Heroes are, the classes (Fighter, Magic-User and Thief) and a list of monsters, it harks back to the *D&D Player's Handbook* , but, in its own way, this is not a real problem. You are still left tittering at the text, which though not purple does get a little mauve at times, but it is full of home-truths.



Beyond this introduction, you can actually get to the game and start creating your character, which consists of a series of statistics that you proportion a certain number of points. This, though not exactly revolutionary, is reminiscent of *Beyond Zork*, where certain puzzles needed certain requirements to complete, and I would chance that this is the case in *Hero's Quest* too. Once again, the three classes that you have to choose from are straight from the pages of *Dungeons and Dragons*, yet, for simplicity, the characters of Fighter, Magic-User and Thief are the best options available. Role-players have been crying out for years for companies to take their favourite games and place them on computers, but the complexity of this task always seems to be disappointing. Perhaps instead, they should leave the interactivity to people and let the computer take the role of an intermediary rather than the Dungeon Master. Sierra (or rather Lori Cole, the game's designer) has decided against overstretching themselves and instead have used their now familiar 3-D graphical system and just expanded upon its uses, and quite possibly, its appeal.

Once your character class has been chosen, you find that you also have certain skills, which sit alongside your five abilities. These affect combat, magic and those very handy thieving skills, such as creeping around and opening locks. You are also assigned points for total health (a sort of bar chart version of hit points), stamina (a decreasing scale of fatigue) and magic (an indication of how many points you have to cast spells). Practice improves these and, for things like wounds, sleep helps as well. Money is earned by undertaking tasks posted in the Guild Hall and used to buy basic necessities like food, equipment and the odd flagon of ale! There is also the option of saving your precious alter-ego for further adventures; most notably the almost obligatory *Hero's Quest II:Trial By Fire*. I chose a Magic-User, named him Boris, and the quest had begun.



So here you start the game proper and find yourself in Spielburg Valley (I kid you not). Actually, you start in the capital city of Spielburg and are confronted with a poster which asks for some inexperienced Adventurers, just like you! The town itself is made up of all the necessary buildings to make your stay in Spielburg as pleasant as possible. There is an inn, the adventurer's Guild Hall, a shop for buying magical scrolls and potions, shops for food and the Sheriff's office to bring back all the no-good brigands that you will invariably capture.

I started by exploring every nook and cranny, which seemed the most sensible thing to do. To this end, I found a lot of locked doors (I knew I should have taken a Thief!), a beggar who wanted some hard-earned silver just to tell me not to drink this grog called Dragon's Breath (which sounded more

like common sense to me) and finally ended up browsing through the Quests noticeboard in the Guild Hall. Trying to ignore the GuildMaster's dreadful snoring, I found that the town's healer had lost her gold ring and that there was a reward of quite a few gold coins. So off I trotted to the nearest yokel and asked them where I could find the healer's home. I was directed out of the gates and along the north road to a small cottage. Within, I talked to the healer about her ring and set off to find it with all speed (as I had just found that typing [+] makes you run faster).

The forest in which I found myself was larger than I at first assumed, with several hidden features that I, in all my haste, initially sped straight past. I was set upon by kobolds at one stage and fought quite bravely for a spell-caster before fleeing in the opposite direction when my spells ran out.

Combat is undertaken on a different screen from the main action, looking from a point that is roughly two feet above the top of your character's head. You can see your hands and the weapons you are wielding, plus how your stats are faring as the monsters gnash and slash at you in full animation. Spells can be cast with little fuss and your blows are animated too. Regrettably, so is your death! Being a Magic-User, I was not really the sort to get involved in close quarter combat, and I did not fare very well. Even backed up by magic, the kobold was more than a match for my puny dagger. It's just as well that the FLEE option was only a keystroke away!

Throughout this game, I was always coming up against problems that made me think that I should have taken one of the other character choices at the beginning. For example, in the fights I wanted to heft an enormous sword through my attacker's skull and when I reached the cliffs I wanted to climb them to reach ledges higher up. In both wishes, I failed. Perhaps I should restart again? Well, that's the beauty of the design in a game like this, you always (in effect) make the wrong decision, for I know that if I had chosen a Fighter, I would have been forever wondering what lurked behind the watching eye of the Magic Shop, or how to unlock the many impassable doors in the town. Like life, you can but admit your failings and shortcomings, and start to exploit your strong points. Yet after a few hours, I began to wonder if beefcake Boris would ever find any.

After a few hours of playing, this game begins to come into it's own, for here you start to develop an affinity with your character - and although it is nothing like the sort of interaction and

role-playing you would get by playing *Dungeons & Dragons* with a group of friends - it definitely succeeds in its aims. There are two channels that role-playing games seem to be travelling down; one school follows the interactive path, where redesigning the real world seems to be the goal, and the other deals with the rules of role-playing, the tables and statistics side of things. There seems to be little to choose between the two besides personal preference, but whichever way you sway, *Hero's Quest* seems to be big enough for some real exploration and graphic enough to entertain the most stalwart role-player into getting to grips with his alter-ego on the screen.

And the rest...

THE COLONEL'S BEQUEST

Sierra are definitely getting more daring with their game plots, for here we see a complete departure from all their earlier material. With just as much attention to detail as *Gold Rush!*, *The Colonel's Bequest* is set in the depths of America's past. Here you are Laura Bow, a young college student, caught up within an old Colonel's house and a spot of murder and mystery in the misty bayous of Southern Louisiana. The whole plot surrounds the Colonel Henri Dijon and his will, plus a host of scurulous characters who all what to have his money. The plot is staright from Agatha Christie and no cliché is left unused as you try to survive the night while finding out just whodunnit.

The Sierra system has been enhanced for these new games and it certainly shows here. The authenticity of the costumes and settings go a long way to creating the right mood. There is also quite a lot of freedom, and a feeling of exploration rather than puzzle-solving. Being the kind of person who goes weak at the knees every time they bring out a new PD James book, I am certainly looking forward to getting my little mitts on this one.

CODENAME : ICE MAN

Rather than writing *Police Quest 3*, Jim Wallis seems to have decided that he would rather be James Bond than a mundane cop. Here he transports you to the 21st century for a run-in with some sophisticated simulations of submarines and, finally, a few terrorists. This really is not for the average adventurer, for it's appeal will be a cross-pollination of both arcade player and Sierra fan. Arcade-style sequences have crept their way into Sierra's games over the past year or so and I think this game has just the sort of plot to show off what they can do in this area. It will be interesting to see how far this extends in the finished game.

LEISURE SUIT LARRY 3

Just like a broken boomerang, Larry Laffer is back again, but this time he's not alone. After a bit of a name change, Passionate Patty joins Larry in their quest for the perfect mate and you can play either character as they progress through the game. Apparently *Larry 3* is steamier than the first, as quite a lot of people were a bit disappointed with the second game - not even Mary Whitehouse raised an eyebrow. They claim this is the first ever adventure to allow players to switch roles during play, but that was done quite a few years ago in *The Hobbit*, amongst others. Still, it may not be quite so unique as they claim in the gaming department, but I'm sure that Larry will keep everyone amused with his own outstanding behaviour... Hmmm, let's not get into the double entendres, we had enough of that with Elvira last Issue (Who said, 'Oh no we didn't'?). They do hint from the synopsis that Patty's dream man has vanished off the face of the earth, so this man be more like *Space Quest IV* than *Larry 3*!

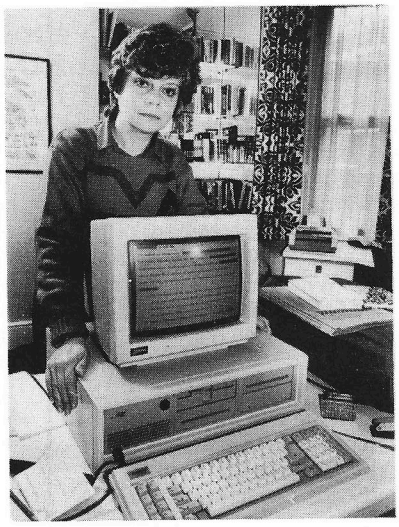
SORCERIAN

Of all the new Sierra titles, this is the one that I know the least about, but it appears to be a combination of action, adventure and role-playing all rolled into one. There are three seperate scenarios, each one split into five sections, and they dabble in arcade and strategy elements to bring across all the different quests. From the same stable as *Silpheed*, we'll just have to wait and see what this little bundle has to offer.

...WELL JACQUI LYONS RETURNS THIS ISSUE WITH HER FINAL ROUND-UP OF THE COMPUTER WORLD IN RUSSIA... HIGHLY TOPICAL NOW...

Jacqui Lyons is the Managing Director of Marjacq Micro Limited, a company which is a Programmers' Agency, wrestling with the publishers on a daily basis on behalf of its clients. Jacqui is the most respected of Programmers Agents and represents some of the best development houses and individual programmers in the World. Her job is to assess their work, and sell it for the right price. As if to exemplify her commitment to the developers, she has recently been behind the Iron Curtain to meet and encourage Russian intellectuals. In Issue 7, Jacqui told of her arrival and first impressions of the Russian computer world, a world, like its society, that is totally different from our own.

In light of the recent events at the Berlin Wall, it may be that this world may change more dramatically, but for now, her experiences are a weighty reminder of life in the Soviet Bloc. We return to her now on her first night in Moscow...



LYONS IN RUSSIA

L.Y.O.N.S . I.N . R.U.S.S.I.A

That evening, Dianne and I addressed the members of the co-operative. About thirty-five programmers turned up for this. I was immensely nervous - I've never spoken in front of a user-group before, let alone thirty-odd Soviet programmers. Having heard copying was rampant in the USSR, when I'd prepared my speech I'd included an extensive piece about piracy and the problems caused by illegal copying in the West. However, having experienced first-hand some of the problems any Soviet programmer must encounter, I dropped this part. In Russia, as I've said, there simply is no distribution network and the small amount of Western software available is either loaned or copied, or it doesn't get round to the programming fraternity at all. Assemblers and compilers are, of course, locally written but compatibility with the Western technology is, obviously, suspect. Therefore, the Russians are reliant on receiving support from the West and until recently this simply wasn't available, either because the technology was controlled from the West or because it wasn't allowed into the USSR. When arranging the trip, Stepan had asked for a whole array of development packages and assemblers, everything requied to build programs. I hadn't been able to understand then why he'd also been at great pains to say that *The Wall* had been legally written. Now I understood what he was talking about. I also felt a tremendous sense of frustration.

Seeing so many talented programmers desperate for support and not being able to give any real promises, made me angry. A couple of young people from the Kasparov Computer Club also attended this talk and had great ideas for games, but little chance of writing them, at least for the time being. Via others involved with Garry Kasparov, I've been sending over bits and pieces of software for the past couple of months. Among the Club members, who'd got hold of these games and played them on the quiet, adventures appeared the most popular - *The Pawn* was a big hit with one 14-year old.

If Soviet programers are to join the games programming fraternity, they need access to Western products. There is a very different type of thinking between East and West programmers - the Russians have interesting, wide-appealing ideas, although the games are poorly presented; witness *Tetris*. Of course, *Tetris* kept being mentioned. At the time, it was at the height of its popularity in the States and Dianne was certainly looking for something like it, though, sadly, *The Wall*, wasn't it. I was, to say the least, disappointed, most especially for the team who have developed this game. I think it's compulsive and also witty - at the end of the game you are presented with a graphic of the Statue of Liberty! I couldn't help thinking that really the Americans want the same thing all over again - they're scared of breaking convention but when, occasionally, almost by default, they do, they just want to keep repeating the same formula.

During that day we ate at two wonderful Russian Co-operative restaurants. The first was in a building which, from the outside, looked run-down and seedy. Amazingly, though, the restaurant took *American Express* and *Diners Club*, though unless you'd been in the company of a Muscovite, you'd never have found out. The food was unusual, rather spicy and, in some ways, Arabic. Alcohol is not allowed to be served in Co-operatives, instead one drinks fruit water. I asked Stepan why such a lovely place didn't advertise itself - there wasn't even a sign visible from the outside. This, apparently, is to dissuade the Russian equivalent of the Mafia getting involved. Surprisingly, bribery plays a large part in Soviet life. For example, any minor traffic infringement requires a bribe. Although the policemen are on foot, they stand at the roadside and swing their batons to stop the car. If you don't get out and pay the consequences, literally, you're stopped further down the road and the "fine" is greater. Not wearing a seat belt costs you 5 roubles, going up a street reserved for members of the Kremlin is more expensive. Initially, I had thought that the money Stepan was handing over was an on-the-spot fine, but I was taught otherwise. The money simply goes towards the upkeep of that particular policeman's family! It's one of the perks of the job.

The other thing that surprised me was the open prostitution at the hotels. What makes this so strange is that you have to show a pass to get into the hotel in the first place, unless you're obviously Western and this is clearly visible because of one's clothes. While waiting for Stepan in the hall one day, I saw dozens of people being stopped and sent on their way. However, after dark, things seem to change,

mostly thanks to the Finns. Moscow hotels are packed with Finns who find it cheaper flying to the USSR to get blind drunk than paying for vodka back home. By 11 pm, the majority of these people were either completely paralytic or in a glazed stupor. Moscow was one of the few places I've ever stayed in where, at night, I didn't feel safe being a woman alone. The prostitutes, who are all rather garishly dressed in 'party frocks', look on a Western female as a threat. They literally walk into you and shove you aside - I was completely non-plussed by this strange behaviour. Although they take money, the way they do it is to say that you can sleep with them for, say $100, and they'll give you 100 roubles in exchange. Therefore, they're not sleeping with a man for money. They're simply making themselves available plus exchanging 100 roubles for hard currency, at the official rate! The first night Dianne and I encountered this bacchanal we were bemused, the second night we took our drinks well away from the party.

The next morning we went in search of presents for Stepan and his family - we'd been invited that last evening in Moscow to a small party to be thrown in our honour and wanted to give a few momentoes. Easier said than done. Our only hope was the Armand Hammer Centre, the hotel in which to stay in Moscow and extremely difficult to get into. Not only is this an hotel, but it also has a small mall consisting of about fourteen shops. In the main they're clothes and gift shops, lots of ivory, silver and painted Russian dolls. There was even a furrier. When I first arrived, this appeared like an Aladdin's cave. Again, entry was restricted and everything purchased had to be in hard currency, though all the prices were marked in roubles! The Centre also has a supermarket and a cinema showing recent US films in English as well as the standard facilities of any Western hotel, like telex. Communication is a problem in Moscow. It took two hours to get a call through to England and that was starting at 11 pm Moscow time. Although I didn't speak long, the cost of the call was over $60 and I certainly couldn't have faxed or telexed from the Intourist Hotel. If you've got the patience, the money and can pull strings, these facilities are available at the Armand Hammer Centre. Seeing goods one can buy, even after a short time looking around empty shops, makes one appreciate the variety and choice available in the West which one takes for granted. Of course the experience doesn't last long, but it certainly does make one realise how lucky one is to live in a democratic society.

Stepan collected us from the hotel and took us on a fascinating trip to a street market. This was one of the only preserved streets I came across in Moscow. Somehow all the lovely houses had escaped demolition, though, again, they were run down. Both sides of the boulevard were lined with artists selling excellent Russian paintings. Some of the pictures were impressive, there was obviously a good deal of talent around. There were also street entertainers. Several poets declaimed their verses which, acording to Stepan, were extremely critical of Communism and a couple of great jazz bands were playing. Further along a politcal meeting was in progress. Although the police were in evidence, they didn't interfere, and the atmosphere was relaxed. I really enjoyed myself, as did Dianne. Our last port of call was a poster shop - and here there was plenty to buy. Posters have played an important role over the years in Russia and there was a huge selection of Communist posters going back almost to the Revolution. Many were on specific themes, like Agriculture, Technology, Science, etc. The stars of Communism, be they political or famous for their work and commitment to the State, were also well represented.

Afterwards, we returned to the Micro-Contour Co-operative. It was Stepan's assistant's birthday - she'd been given a huge bunch of red roses by the group. The treat of the birthday tea was a large bar of Swiss chocolate which Dianne had picked up at the airport before she left San Francisco. It disappeared in seconds!

We were then taken to George's apartment for the farewell party and were showered with presents. A good many friends joined us - some of the women spoke excellent English and we ate a variety of salads and all sorts of different food, including delightful little pasta cases filled with spicy meat. It was a most enjoyable evening and the hospitality and warmth shown to myself and Dianne was unimaginable.

On Saturday, Stepan worked on his car (though this didn't appear to make any appreciable difference), so we were collected from the hotel by his brother, George. After seeing Dianne off back to the States - which was an adventure in itself - I was taken to meet their mother. She lived in a modern development, near the river, between Moscow and the airport. She had waited many years to get this two-room apartment. Until the death of her husband, she had lived in Siberia after which she decided she wanted to be nearer her sons. She was not very far away from the military airport from where all the troops and members of the Kremlin fly. This meant that taking photographs anywhere near the vicinity of the river was prohibited.

By the time we returned to Stepan's flat, he'd finished repairing the Lada. He had been unable to get the necessary parts and had had to do a botch-job until he could. Stepan was an extremely resourceful and capable man, as was confirmed when I went into the Pachikov kitchen. It was small but had a good many modern gadgets such as a microwave oven and a washing machine. And the fitments were modern too - Stepan had built the units, wired up the points, installed the plumbing and laid the floor.

Over coffee, we had a lengthy discussion regarding *The Wall* and *Perestroika*. Once again, I was aware of the different thinking separating us. Because Russian programmers are not exposed to the international games market, the Micro-Contour team felt they needed to prove the worth of the computer to the end-user by educating them as they played the games. I had to point out that, as far as the European and US markets are concerned, the computer is simply an alternative means of recreation. Any game that even hints at 'educating' is virtually unacceptable to entertainment software publishers - to Micro-Contour this is a completely foreign concept and one they're going to have to learn to come to terms with.

Later on, I climbed into the Lada for the last time and we drove off to the airport. As usual, it was pretty chaotic with long queues waiting to go through security and customs. When eventually I got through the last clearance, it was time to say goodbye.

I was looking forward to getting back to England, though I'd had a great time and been very well looked after. I was looking forward to again seeing colour in the streets, the diffrent shops and restaurants, being once again in the bustle of London, to so many indefinable things that makes this a free society. I also felt guilty because I could just step on a plane and once again enjoy these luxuries. Stepan and the programmers of *The Wall* would also enjoy the opportunity of being able to buy any computer they chose, the chance to try any software they fancied, the possibility of acquiring any of the tools they felt would make them even better developers. But that's all in the future.

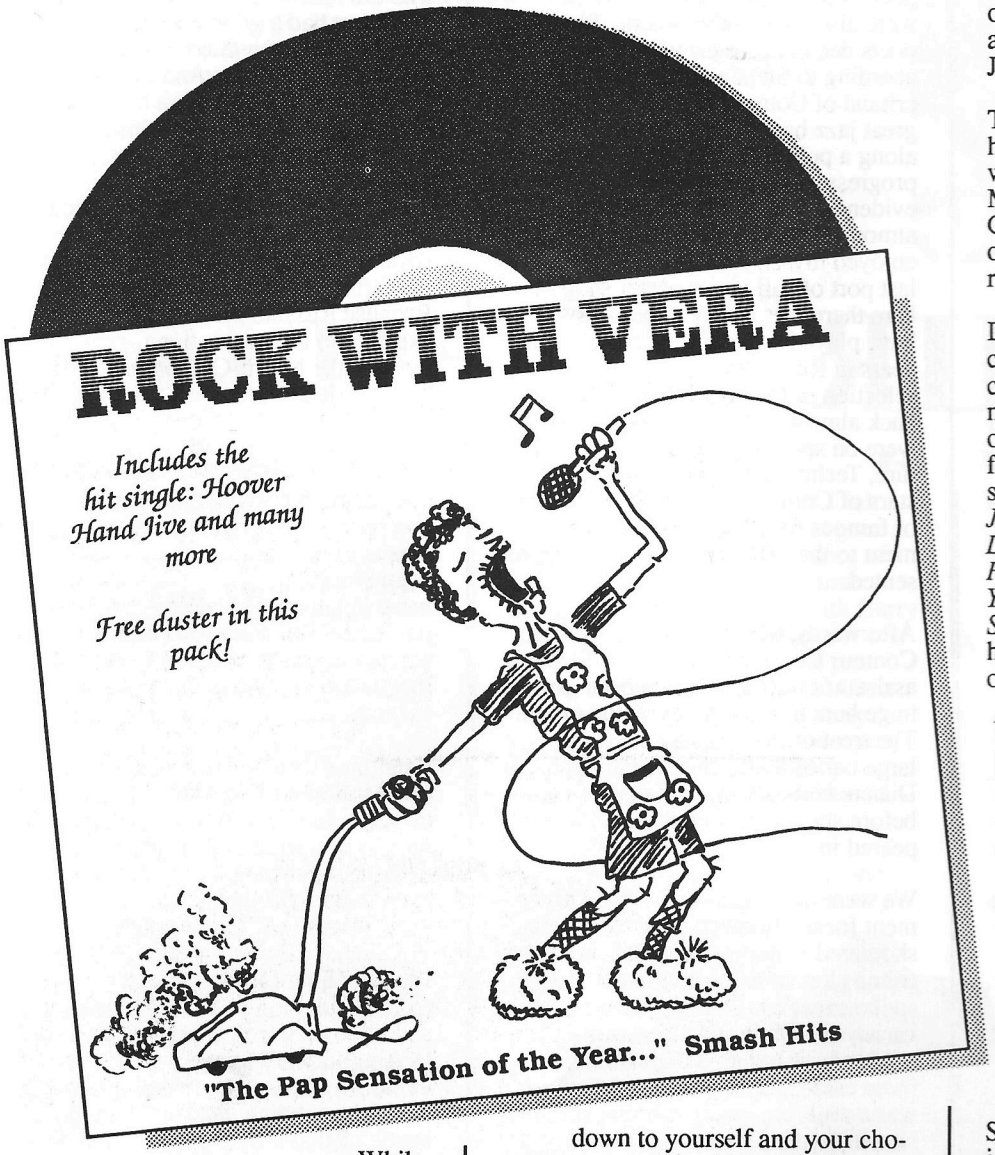
Although, there's a long, hard road ahead for all Russian programmers, I came away confident that, perhaps, Stepan and the Micro-Contour team wouldn't have to wait too long.

* * * *

...PLAY-BY-MAIL SEEMS TO BE A BIT IN VOGUE AT THE MOMENT... GET AGENT KNIGHT TO COVER SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS HIM...

POP STAR

A DREAM COMES TRUE FOR AGENT KNIGHT AND VERA!



While gazing into space after spotting the heading on this page, I would like to ask you one question: 'Have you ever thought about being a famous Pop Star, appearing on TV shows and having the money to buy things you've always wanted?' No? Well stop reading now and turn the page! On the other hand, you may be thinking 'Yes'. If so, you can simulate being one by playing this *Pop Star* PBM from Ideal Games, which could turn out being the solution to all your fantasies and dreams. Eat your heart out Kylie and Jason, and make way for the new stars of tomorrow.

As you are the star throughout your turns, making decisions is entirely down to yourself and your chosen manager. It is vital to hire a manager who is there to take care of your accounts and other menial tasks (in other words, he is your dog's body). Take your pick from the list of four possibilities; Mr. Connolly, Mr. Crossan, Mr. McAllister and Mr. Sharkey, each having a percentage next to their name. Don't think that by hiring the cheapest manager, you will get to be as famous as you could have been if you'd hired the most expensive, because you will be wrong. In a business like this, you get what you pay for.

When you receive your first turn sheet, you have to decide upon an album name. Our band name was... yes, you've guessed it, *Confidential*. And our album was dedicated, and named after, our one and only 'Hoover Hand Jive' cleaner, Vera!

The resulting album, *Rock With Vera*, has been praised by the critics of the world. 'The raunchiest album since Max Bygraves' Singalonga Christmas Carol' said NME. 'The Pap Sensation of the Year' said Smash Hits. 'It's utter rubbish!' said Kerrang!

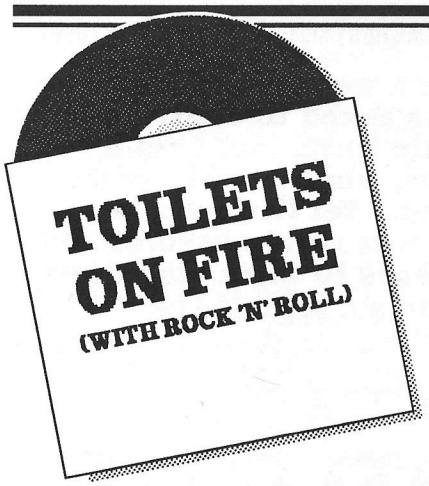
Deciding on ten titles for your forthcoming album is the next thing that can be really fun! We based the title names around the people who work in our company. For example, here are a few to watch out for when you subscribe to this PBM: *Hoover Hand Jive, Wave Your Duster In The Air Like You Just Don't Care, Toilets on Fire With Rock 'n' Roll, Oh J.T., Won't You Dance With Me?*, and *Scream and Shout, Let Your Zork Hang Out!*. We have been assured that these will be outstanding hits.

When writing and releasing a single, you may choose to use one from your album or write one from scratch. You can start to write a song on turn one, but it cannot be released until the second. Either way, make sure the song quality is acceptable as this determines how well the single will do in the charts. Each turn, you will receive a full run-down of the Top 40 singles and Top 20 albums. Some of the highest new entries and climbers are also included.

So far, I have not mentioned the subject of 'Money'. It's not a 'sore' subject as you are given £50,000 to start your career with. Remember to spend this wisely as you have to consider your future affairs (not those sort of 'affairs', Trevillian!). For example, touring, producing videos, publicity, etc.

Promoting your band, or yourself if you decide on a solo career, and the songs you record is a key part in becoming well-known and eventually famous (a little like me really). One way of doing this is to make a video. There are seven types you can choose from;

1 Studio video, without storyline.
2 Concert video.
3 On location without storyline.



4 Video with storyline.
5 On location with storyline
6 Special FX video.
7 New concept.

These range from £5,000 to £500,000 in price. To begin with, selecting the Studio video, without a storyline, will probably be the best and you will not be able to afford much else at this point either. This is a very basic video with no storyline to the song, but with a bit of luck it will make people buy it.

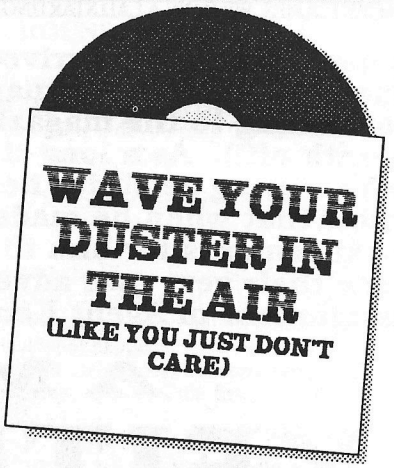
As your bank balance increases, hopefully so will your fan following, thus allowing you to spend more money and time on videos like the New Concept choice. This would be something in the video world that hasn't been done before, so it's sure to sell well.

Touring is a great way to attract more fans. The prices are obviously high, but you've got to spend money to make money. You may tour one, or all of the six major countries (UK, Europe, Japan, Russia, Australia, America), or all the world. The prices for these range from £15,000 to £250,000. When you tour, fan following figures will not fall, they may rise on one tour, while others may keep figures the same.

Your health is probably the most important factor within the game. When you are playing a gig, health and fitness will slowly deteriorate, This will also happen if you are doing too much other work. It is wise to rest on your free days as medical expenses can be very high if you fall ill, so try and prevent such an occurrence happening.

With each turn sheet you will receive, 'Pop Column', which is a monthly news letter. This enables you to air your views to the other players within the game. It can be used to advertise for new band members, boasting, arranging duets or just to send messages. Try not to give much away concerning you or your group's future plans because rumours can turn into gossip (so eat your heart out Mrs. Mangel!).

My overall opinion of this PBM is that it's nicely laid out in the game style. Preparation of the game turn sheets is easy to understand and the instructions explain in detail, how to organise your time.



At £1.00 per turn and a first class stamp, you will get a rulebook and a start-up sheet.

The only fault I found was the general waiting time for your reply which was usually about three weeks. But still well worth the money if you want the chance at becoming famous.

As the rulebook so rightly puts it, "Life is not easy in Pop Star, as you will soon find out. The road to stardom is long and difficult, many of your rivals will be out to take your place, but to preserve your fame you must perform to the audience, to the world...."

MODERATION: Computer/Human
SETTING: Present Day
TOPIC: Power Game
DIFFICULTY: 30%
COMMENTS: being a Pop Star isn't as easy and laid back as you think it is when you watch music programmes on TV; and this game proves it! Although the game rules are detailed and easy-to-use, the hardest part is handling your time to keep a good grip over what the future holds for you. Pop Star is cheap, interesting and good fun.
START-UP: £1.00 (Rules only)
TURN FEE: £1.00 + 1st Class stamp
ADDRESS: Ideal Games, 72 Townsend Street, Strabane, Co. Tyrone, N. Ireland, BT82 8HY.

...AGENT JAMES, WE HAVE A LAD STARTING ON WORK EXPERIENCE FOR A WEEK TOMORROW... MAKE SURE HE'S USEFUL AND SEES EVERYTHING...

When James Kent arrived at the Official Secrets offices for a week's Work Experience, little could he imagine what awaited him. For he was asked to contribute something to the magazine, and he chose the Personnel File (suits me, I get a month off!). As a long-time fan of Computer & Video games, when asked which adventuring celebrity he would pick, the choice was obvious. Yet little did he know that when he made up his questions, that the editor was making secret arrangements for him to be whisked down to the EMAP offices to meet and interview their very own adventure columnist in the flesh... And so, here is the first assignment of Agent Kent for the Confidential Personnel File...

A MEETING WITH KEITH CAMPBELL

Computer and Video Games has now been going for around eight years with your column being a regular feature. Were you involved from the first issue or contacted at a later date? My column has been going from the first Issue (incidentally, they left the 'P' out of my surname in Issue 1!) - it all came about because I wrote an adventure called Fairy Tale and sent it off to a company to publish. It was just fortunate that C&VG rang them to see if they had any authors who would be interested in writing and Adventure Page.

What was the first computer you ever owned? It was a TRS-80 Model 1 (16k cassette).

What was it that started you playing adventure games? A friend at work also had a TRS-80 and he brought in *Adventureland* by Scott Adams. I enjoyed it, sent off for it and spent a whole weekend when it arrived playing it with the family!

Was it your idea to write the *C&VG Book Of Adventure* and how successful was it? Were you pleased with it when it was completed? The idea was a joint thing between me and Terry Pratt (the then editor of C&VG). I liked the front cover design, but the actual book wasn't successful in terms of the number of copies sold. I was pleased to have the opportunity to write a book, but there were a few bits I would now like to improve or add to.

Do you plan on writing any more books in the future? No. I haven't had a chance.

Do you enjoy reading books in your spare time? If so who is your favourite writer or writers? I enjoy reading, but don't really have a favourite writer. I like spy thrillers and science fiction books best. Oh, and I do enjoy *Rumpole of the Bailey*!

How has your adventure section in Computer and Video Games changed over the years? From the start, I always wanted more than one page, which was all I had in the first Issues, taken up with programming tips and a single game review. Then it got bigger - between six to eight pages a few years ago - though now it's back down to three, as all the reviews are included in another part of the magazine. There used to be a lot more adventures to cover than there are now, but everything has changed in the last six months. I can't get a double page spread even for an excellent game now.

What has happened to the *Fiend of Faringdon*? He got dropped. Tim Metcalfe, the former editor, liked the *Fiend* column, but the new editor wasn't too keen on the idea. But he was a real person, not something we thought up. It all started when I used to get letters printed on huge rolls of Spectrum paper - and it went on from there.

Would you say that the number of letters received recently containing pleas for help or solutions has increased or decreased? Recently they have increased, but this is after a decrease over the past two years. The peak used to be about four hundred a month, but that was when I was on Channel 4 and the *Book Of Adventure* was out. *The Hobbit* is probably the game I've answers the most letters on!

"...incidentally, they left the 'P' out of my surname in Issue 1 of Computer & Video Games..."

Is there any particular game at the moment that a lot of people are stuck in? Recently it was *Rigel's Revenge*, but at the moment, it's pretty diverse.

What would you like to be doing if

you weren't writing about adventure games? Well, I do write my adventure columns in my spare time, which not a lot of people realise. If I wasn't doing those, I'd like to put my feet up and watch TV.

From most of your reviews, you seem to prefer the traditional text adventure. Has this view changed as more icon adventures and role-playing games are released? Yes, my view has changed. The early graphic adventures were very slow and, if you cut the pictures, responses got quicker. Also, graphics were never very good and didn't add anything to the game at all. The text always said it better. With the new 16-bit machines, graphics and animation have been added and I like them far more. But saying that, text adventures concentrate the mind on puzzles and humour, whereas graphic puzzles have to be simpler.

"...I write my adventure columns in my spare time, which not a lot of people realise... and if I wasn't doing that I'd like to put my feet up..."

Do you agree with the view that text adventures should be dropped by the companies and more graphic adventures produced, as with Infocom and now Level 9? Not necessarily, but as a commercial fact of life, I think that it is inevitable.

Out of all of the games you've seen what is your favourite or favourites? Ah, now that's tricky. Of course, I have a soft spot for *Adventureland*, as it was the first, but my all-time favourite is *Stationfall*. It has a good story and is not too difficult. A close second is *Jinxter*, which is the best of the Magnetic Scrolls games, being both fun and not too difficult.

What company do you think has released the best software over recent years? It still has to be Infocom, even though they have faded slightly. *Zork Zero* is extremely good.

What computer would you say has the best support of adventure game manufacturers? Worldwide, it's the IBM PC, but this is mainly because of Sierra On-Line in America.

Do you think that Dungeon Master deserved all of the praise it received? Yes, but it's a sore point that I never reviewed it when it came out!

Have you ever played an actual role-playing games (not on a computer)? Yes, I went live role-playing at Peckforton Castle with Treasure Trap for the April '85 Issue of C&VG and I've done a little table-top gaming some years ago.

Did you attend the recent PC Show at Earls Court? If so, how do you think it compares to previous shows? I did go, but I don't think that it compared to previous years. And of course EMAP have just announced their show for September 1990 which will be interesting.

Are there any games that are due out soon that you are especially looking forward too? Well, there is the *Game-That-I-Cannot-Mention* from Magnetic Scrolls, which is due in March '90, but I'm also looking forward to *Leisure Suit Larry III* in the new year.

What does your wife think of your adventurous lifestyle? Ruth thinks that adventures have taken over my life, which I suppose they have, but she is very good about it and *very*

* * * *

HOUND OF SHADOW HINTS!

If you have Photography skill, you'll get a camera, it's worth photgraphing important things, developing the film and seeing what you get.

Try looking at the frieze or pediment outside the British Museum.

Using the Pubs: For a bit of light relief - if everything else gets a bit too horrifying - you can go to the pub in London and see what happens. You can go in on several occasions and different things will happen. Don't let the first time put you off.

If you've got a character with high Medical skill, there is somewhere where you can use it to good effect (especially around the Medium).

There is also a Pause function that is not mentioned in the manual, so if you type in PAUSE at any time, this will pause the game, otherwise, left to itself, it will chug on and you will loose stuff (Not the sort of game you want to leave in the room on its own).

Another place to dig into is the magazine, The Tattler (which for those of you who are not old enough to remember the 1920s, was an old Punch-style society magazine) - again it is not essential, but it will reveal various clues if you keep it handy.

CAMPBELL

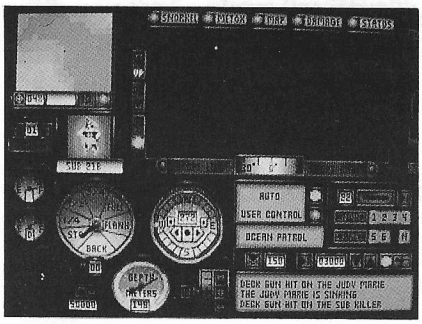
First names: Keith
Date of birth: March 1940
Star sign: Pisces
Place of birth: Brighton
Height: 6' 6"
Weight: 15st
Colour of hair: Grey
Colour of eyes: Grey-Blue
Educated: Varndean Grammar School for Boys
Marital status: Married to Ruth (his long-suffering wife!)
Occupation: Engineering Systems Analyst
Favourite food: Chicken Dansak
Pastimes: Playing and writing adventure games (and eating chicken dansak)
Likes: Holidays, wine, days off from work (and eating chicken dansak)
Dislikes: Days at work, doesn't suffer fools gladly (and not eating chicken dansak!)

...GET THAT SAILOR'S HAT OFF MR. CHRISTIAN LOCKWOOD AND REPORT AT 0800 HOURS TO BE LASHED AND KEELHAULED...

RUNNING WITH THE Wolfpack

This winter Mirrorsoft and PSS are set to release a series of strategy and wargame products which they hope will break SSI's current stranglehold on the field. One such product is called *Wolfpack* produced under an agreement with US giants Broderbund and veteran publishers, Novalogic. They claim it will be a wartime naval simulation successfully recreating the events of Autumn 1942 in a way never seen before on a home computer. Not wishing to accept such a claim without proof, I donned my heavy sweater, waterproofs and binoculars and surfaced somewhere near the Mirrorsoft offices determined to find out for myself.

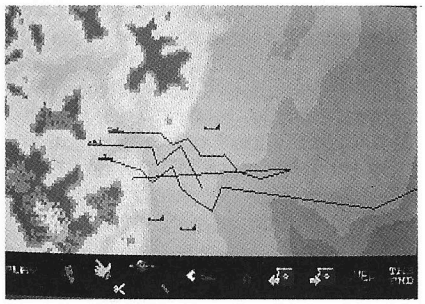
Wolfpack is currently being written in the United States for the 16-bit machines by a Novalogic programming team. The demonstration was run for me by Mirrorsoft's George Boxaul, once of Rainbird. He took me through the programme's paces and explained that every few weeks a new version arrives from America. This is then played, tested for bugs and any problems are quickly reported back to the US. Mirrorsoft are hoping that it'll be another *F16 Falcon*, in terms of sales at least, and from what I saw I would be inclined to believe them, though the game was far from finished.



Electronic Arts have recently scored a direct hit with their excellent *688 Attack Sub* which successfully manages to combine arcade elements with a realistic submarine simulation. *Wolfpack* won't allow the complex use of tactics like *Attack Sub*, such as evading sonar detection by hiding in different thermal layers within the sea, but it will offer the tension of subs versus destroyers with arcade elements. Initially, the game will employ several fixed scenarios set in the North Atlantic of 1942, but as with the *Universal Military Simulator*, it features a unique construction set making it possible to recreate famous battles from the past or write your own from scratch. The version I saw allowed you to play either the captain of a submarine or a destroyer, so giving the game more options. To change the level of difficulty you could alter the type of commander in charge of your enemies vessel, be they subs or ships. One type of commander may be very cautious, another aggressive, and so on. Most players will probably be content to command a single submarine against a convoy, but the more ambitious will find it relatively easy to control a pack thus increasing your strategic options quite considerably.

While you take direct command of one vessel the rest can be issued with blanket orders such as 'shadow' which means they will follow a convoy no matter what course or action you take. Switching between vessels and changing orders is simple and achieved through neatly arranged icon-driven commands. The speed of a vessel can be altered as you wish, while setting a course is no more complicated than drawing a straight line between two points with the mouse pointer. One neat touch is that incoming messages are displayed on a moving teletype printer.

All the action is viewed from the bridge of either a sub' or ship complete with radar, instruments and periscopes. The graphical representations of each bridge (the version I saw was run on an IBM PC with EGA) are quite detailed and atmospheric. After a quick tour round each vessel I was shown what I could do through the available commands, a comprehensive list of ships and submarines each accompanied by a neat graphic and a set of statistical information, so just like a true *Wolfpack* commander you should be able to identify the silhouettes of vessels in an instant.



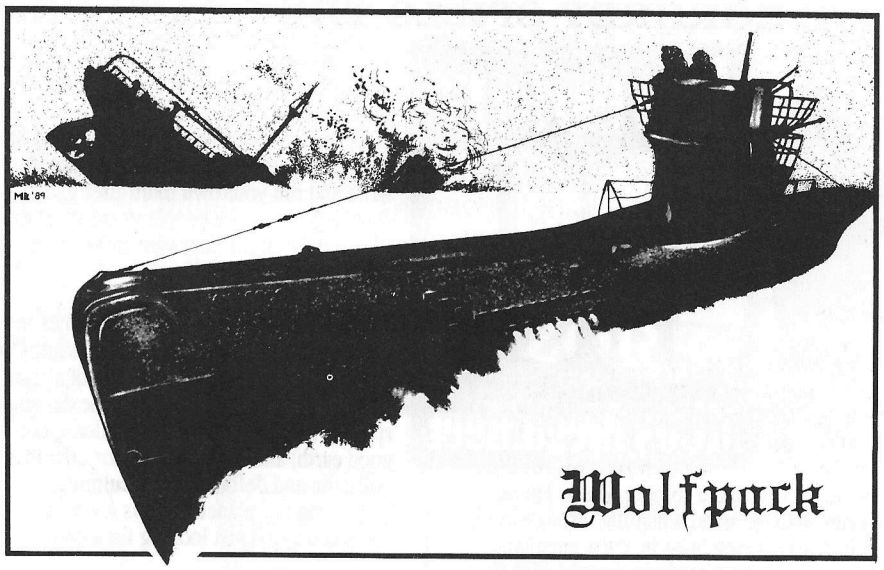
When finished, the IBM PC version will feature true VGA graphics and not merely ported across EGA graphics. It's a huge project and a testament to the skill of the programming team who have developed a new compression method to cram 1.2 megabytes of information onto a 360K disk. In spite of the high compression ratio, they claim decompression is extremely fast allowing for real time animation at a frame rate ten times faster than comparable programes.

PSS think that when finished *Wolfpack* will combine the very best elements of both arcade and strategy games and feature a number of technical innovations which have never been considered possible until now. I don't know quite what these will be and it will be a short time at least before we can find out. *Wolfpack* is scheduled to be released for the IBM PC and compatibles on both 3.5" and 5.25" disks with CGA, EGA and VGA this winter, perhaps in late December. Amiga and Atari ST versions are said to be under development but won't be ready before early 1990.

However, that's not the end of the story as George kindly offered to show me another project they had under development. This one is called *Harpoon* and again, if the PR department is to be believed, it should be a breakthrough in military computer gaming - the most extensive simulation of modern naval warfare ever. *Harpoon* started life as a board game created by the much respected Larry Bond, NATO wargames referee, naval analyst and author of the novel *Red Storm Rising*. The game hopes to make the most of Larry's knowledge of NATO and Warsaw Pact weapons systems and tech-

nology to help create the most accurate simulation of present day sea warfare possible (until the next one comes along of course).

Basically, *Harpoon* is about a naval task force where the player is cast in the role of a NATO commander (as you would expect from a US author). Your job is to defend Europe against a Communist Bloc attack. The demo version I saw, was again very well presented but gave you no choice about which side you played. I would hope the finished product would incorporate this relatively simple but effective option, so if you really wanted to, you could play a Russian General attacking NATO.



One problem with strategy games as a whole is that, in the quest for realism, programmers bury the player under a complex set of rules and an instruction manual that are an effort to read and hard to comprehend. The authors, 360 Degree Software, say that each player should have at his fingertips a wealth of easy to assess intelligence information. The authors are determined that playability should not be sacrificed for realism, but that realism should not suffer either.

Everything is controlled via pull-down menus and pop-up windows, in a manner not too dissimilar to that employed in Mindscape's *Balance of Power*. In addition, a "Staff Assistant" is on hand to help with the fundamentals of the game and take over the tedious task of book keeping, freeing the player, like a true military commander to concentrate on giving orders and developing strategy.

Harpoon has access to over a hundred NATO and Soviet weapons systems (ships, aircraft and submarines) which are displayed side by side for comparison in high resolution, full colour digitised pictures.

For those that want to just get on with the game Larry Bonds has included a non-technical 'nutshell' commentary which illustrates the merits and drawbacks of each system. Alternatively, for those that like to probe, calculate and plan in great detail there is a complete detailed technical readout on each type of weapons system be it a ship or submarine. The player has a choice of many different battle settings and an entry level system for more experienced players. *Harpoon* hopes to offer realism, playability and depth to all games players regardless of the their experience.

Harpoon should appear first on the IBM PC this winter while Amiga and Atari ST versions won't be ready until early 1990. The project has already undergone lengthy development and it is still a little away from being completed, so these dates aren't rock solid.

I must admit to being impressed with *Harpoon*, a little bit more so in fact than with *Wolfpack*. The former had the feel of a genuine wargame where to achieve victory you'd have to possess an astute mind, capable of calculating the strength of forces and vessels at an instant. In *Harpoon*, your eyes are three on-screen maps of varying scale which offer a grand view of the North Atlantic where play takes place. Messages and other text information are displayed in a box in the bottom right hand quarter of the screen.

Initially, I'm told there will be seven scenarios to choose from though it is hoped that in the future, further 'missions' will become available on data disks just as with *F16 Falcon*. Several roles will be available depending upon your chosen scenario, from ship or sub' patrol commander to aircraft pilot.

I began by taking a group of five small ships out on patrol along the Norwegian coastline. I chose my vessels, set a course and speed. One of my ships, a light cruiser, used a type of early warning equipment that was only effective if acting away from other vessels. So, using a 'formation' command, I set the ship out on point and ordered it to maintain the minimum distance at all times.

Despite radar, attacks can come at any time - as I found out. We were patrolling in a zig-zag pattern when the picture of an officer appeared on the screen informing me of an incoming missile. At the same time, a red blip appeared on the radar screen. The same officer informed me it would be engaged when within range. I then changed the game timer from 1 second to 5 minutes to put the missile in range quickly. Unfortunately, Russian electronic counter measures defeated our anti-missile missiles and we were forced into taking evasive action. My first officer (a real harbinger of doom) informed me of another three new incoming missiles at the same time we detected four Russian vessels on the periphery of our radar. One of my ships was struck and sunk. I then decided to spilt my force into two groups of two to confuse the missiles. I changed their headings and speed and moved to attack, but found myself outgunned and out of range. In the face of such odds, we ran, or rather, sailed away.

My first outing as a NATO commander saw me soundly beaten but in the finished product this scenario would be only just beginning.

In the past, computer mariners have been well served with games like *Hunt for Red October*, *Red Storm Rising* and *Silent Service*. Neither *Harpoon* nor *Wolfpack* appear to employ revolutionary techniques, despite the claims of the authors, but what they try to do, without doubt, they do very well. I'm sure that when they surface on home micro's, between them they'll bring the world of naval warfare to the attention of a large amount of people who were previously unexcited by the prospect of being all at sea.

* * * *

...SO AFTER ALL THE FUSS ABOUT ADVENTURE '89... HOW DID IT GO?...YOU WERE ILL AND COULDN'T GO!!! WELL GET SOMEONE WHO DID....

PIP CORDREY SPILLS THE BEANS ON THE FESTIVITIES OF...

In the background a sombre Manor House stands with the wind whistling through its old chimneys. On the lawn below a huge blue and white marque has been erected with flags flying, puffing in and out like a great dragon breathing. The field of Agincourt? A joust before the King to win a ladies favour. No none of these. This was *Adventure '89*, the annual convention of adventure games played by computer. This year the event was sponsored by Micro-Net and took place in the grounds of the Manor House owned by Pip Cordrey, the event's chairman.

Twenty multi-user games were represented and could all be play tested. This was a great chance for players and programmers to meet and discuss the various games. Throughout the day the lecture room was busy with talks being delivered by well known game coders Chris Butterworth, Pip Cordrey and Alan Lenton covering topics from writing a multi-user game to the latest graphically-orientated concepts. These sessions were very well supported.

Third Millennium Systems, a new company owned by Neil Newel the coder of the now famous game *Shades* took this chance to launch a new game called *Trash*. This game will be available in the new year on Micronet, Prestel, Telecom Gold and the premium-charged Callstream network. In his words; 'Where else could you grow your own spaceship, meet fire-breathing cabbages, teach machinery to hum in tune, cause pink blancmange to rain from the sky, clamber through a giant statue and drive around in an inflatable hover-car...all whilst clearing up rubbish?' *Shades* of course was demonstrated at the show on the smart Micro-Net stand.

MUD, the original multi-user game written by Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle was resurrected for the day. This has now of course been replaced by *MUD II* but the air was thick with nostalgia as old hands like myself looked over the familiar *MUD* landscape again. *MUD II* also had a stand and players took the chance of chatting to Richard who was running it this year.

The *Mirrorworld* stand was interesting as it was demonstrating their highly intelligent multi-plexer by running four games and an E-mail system all at the same time. They also demonstrated their multi-user adventure language called *Slate*, with which any kind of adventure can be written. If you want to write and run your own multi-user game clearly these are the people to speak to, as they supply all the hardware and software you would need.

There were too many small new games to mention in detail, but one stand is worthy of note. This was *Save the Planet*, not a computer game at all but a board game demonstrating the damage that we are doing our good earth, and showing how the effects of pollution and defoliation are culminative in destroying our planet. This is a well thought out board game just looking for a coder.

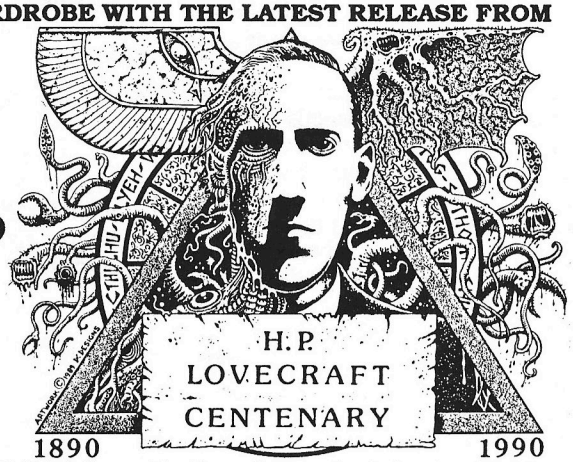
One of the most interesting features of the MUG phenomenon is their social aspect, not just in the game, but outside as well. Every game holds social gatherings, and at these events all the players get together and enjoy meeting the people behind the personae. It's always amazing to see people who were battling each other in cold fury the previous evening sitting down together over a pint, discussing tactics. Previously all these meets have tended to be in pubs and halls up and down the country, although the bigger games have held parties. This year Clubspot and the larger games got together and put on a single major event. The adventure meeting and multi-user game party. The food was excellent and the disco hit just the right sound level, so as not to interfere with conversation. The local pub laid on a bar, and the food was excellent and generous, not to mention hot and non-stop. The party went on late into the night. Some of the players that came from long distances stayed in the marque over night and held the now traditional sugar cube fight in the early hours. Most people were glad of the free tea and coffee which had been served non stop through the day and the night.

Usually when you talk about a window in the weather, you mean that the sun streams through in the middle of a storm. The *Adventure '89* weekend was nothing like that. This time the weather took time off from being brilliantly sunny the week before the event and the week after the event. But the day of the meet the wind speed cups over the greenhouse were reading 70 mile an hour, and driving a fierce rain before it. But intrepid adventurers were not dissuaded by the weather and the years Adventure convention goes marked down as another successful meeting that was just not to be missed.

PIP CORDREY.

REANIMATE YOUR WARDROBE WITH THE LATEST RELEASE FROM

D.C. DESIGNS



The H.P. Lovecraft centenary T-Shirt! Created by Dave Carson, the design is printed in black on white, quality, T-Shirts. Sizes : Large & XLarge (PRICE : £7.95).
The H.P. Lovecraft Centenary design is also available in the form of superb quality prints. Each edition has been printed on 300GSM parilux matt art board, from a metal plate. Dimensions : 297mm x 225mm.

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DEAD LETTER BOX

Here is the Club Noticeboard again! We are also considering a Classified Ads section for the Noticeboard, as suggested by one of our members. For more information, I'm sure the Man In Black wouldn't mind me referring you to the Letter's Page at the back of this (and every) Issue of Confidential. Unless otherwise specified, please send all answers and letters to: Dead Letter Box, including the notice code (if there is one), to the magazine address.

THE ADVENTURE HELPLINE
REMINDER OF OPENING TIMES

Another reminder that the *Adventure Helpline* is manned by John Knight at the following times:

Monday - Friday : 3.00 pm until 8.00 pm
Saturday : Closed
Sunday : 11.00 am - 5.00 pm

Please adhere to these times and try not to call the other numbers with your problems. This also works in reverse; do not ring up the *Helpline* with orders for games or queries as we will not be able to help!

I KNOW WHO SHOT T.R IT WAS

THE ZORK QUEST GOES ON!

I am still trying to find more information about ALL the nine *Zork* games (ie. *Zork I, II & III, Wishbringer, Beyond Zork, Zork Zero, Enchanter, Sorcerer & Spellbreaker*) and all associated products.

It's the information I want, not the actual real items (photocopies will do, I'll destroy them afterwards). So do you havehave any of the *InvisiClue* books, maps or posters of the original *Zork I & II* playing areas (roughly 2' x 2', with maps of the land including pictures of the cyclops and stuff), any *Infocomix, Zork Quest I & II*, any copies of *The New Zork Times* (or *The Status Line*), any other information on the Kingdom of Zork that you would like to add to the Encyclopedia Frobozzica - or you are just crazy about *Zork*, write to: Peter Bowers, 18 Grey Towers Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex or telephone (04024) 56984 (6-8 pm only) asap!

THE ZORK QUEST GOES ON!

I am a desperate man. While demolishing a pint of Vodka, I managed to scribble down this message. HELP! I need a copy of Star Trek and Dungeon Master for the Atari ST. If you can save me phone Radlett 3099. On weekdays after 5pm. Weekend anytime. Also willing to sell Corruption, Bards Tale I and Starglider cheap. Also willing to swap games (ie. Corruption for Dungeon Master).

Grant Saunders.

I AM AN INK SPOT

I've now got Witness, but am still searching for Enchanter, Suspended, Cutthroats, Suspect Deadline and A Mind Forever Voyaging for the ST.

Has anyone got copies of these Infocom games to swap or sell. Good prices paid. Originals only!

Write to Agent Moore at Club address (please).

I AM A PIECE OF SILLY PUTTY →

IT'S A SNIP!

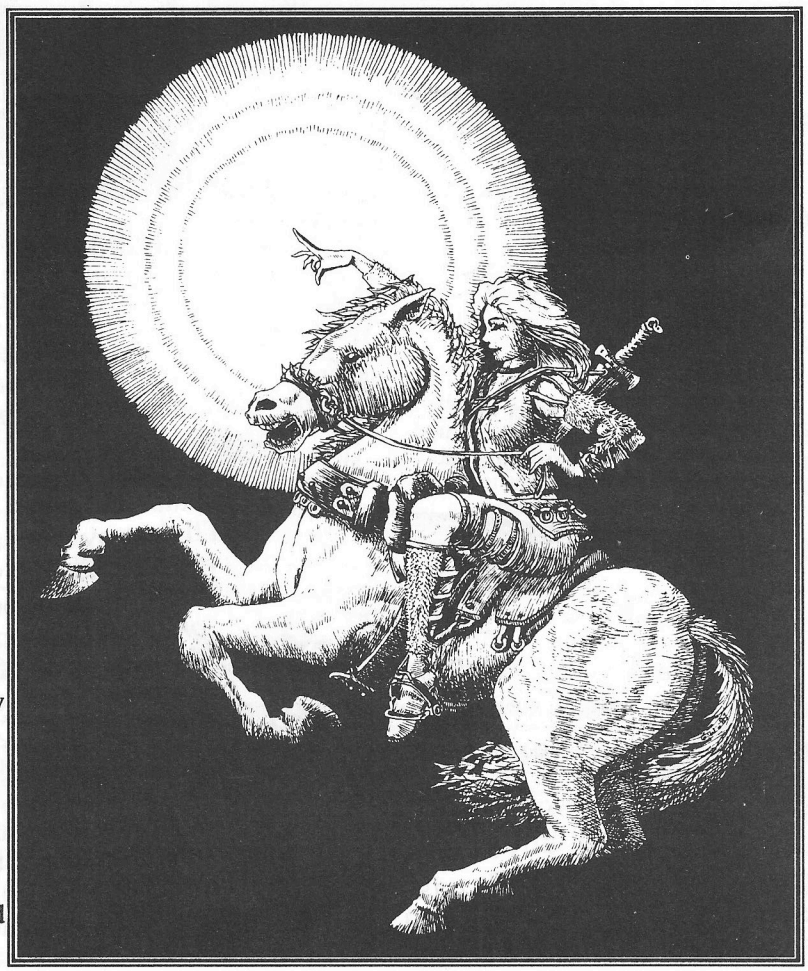
What is? Why, Mike Gerrard's new adventure book, of course! ADVENTURES ON THE SPECTRUM is a 128-page paperback all about... well, Spectrum adventures. Containing dozens of solutions, lots of chapters, thousands of sentences and even more words, it's the bargain of the year at only £4.95 (plus 5p postage if you're in the UK, £1.05 postage elsewhere). So send your cheques, postal orders or international money orders made payable to 'Mike Gerrard' to Mike himself at PO Box 7, Ramsey, Huntingdon, Cambs PE17 2UZ. Oh yes... don't forget your name and address in BLOCK CAPS -- and in your best-handwriting too!

"It's wicked!"

„WELL, HERE IS THE LAST PART OF SANDRA'S ARTICLES ON ADVENTURE WRITING... I'M SURE YOU WILL HAVE FOUND THEM VERY USEFUL...

SANDRA SHARKEY TACKLES THE SUBJECT OF

WRITING YOUR OWN ADVENTURES III



AS THE ONLY 'ADVENTURE FREAK' (my children's term not mine) in the family, I know how frustrating it can be trying to design and program an adventure. The times I've tried to assess their reaction to an idea or even just a puzzle within a game and been met with blank looks or pitiful glances are too numerous to mention.I am full of ideas for adventures, but I know my weaknesses. I am not the world's best writer of descriptive text, I can only program using adventure creators so who better for me to team up with than Pete Gerrard. The only problems we have when it comes to finishing off a game is that neither of us can draw very well, but we are lucky enough to know a couple of very good computer artists.

Ideas tend to come at all times of the day and night, so be sure to have plenty of paper and pens scattered around the house. Once you've got the ideas down on paper then find a box or a drawer to keep them all together for easy reference. If you live near enough to your partner then arrange a regular meeting to talk over any ideas you may have and to work together. Pete and I get together once a week for just a few hours but it's amazing how much work we actually manage to get through. In between the meetings we write or phone each other with any new inspirations or suggestions.

We have our own way of splitting the workload. One of us comes up with a sketchy idea for a scenario which we discuss and expand on. We then work separately for a few days putting loads of ideas onto paper. After pooling our ideas we throw out any that aren't suitable and decide on our storyline.

Once we have the storyline, we make a rough map of our game world, and give each location a description of one or two words. We then decide on our start and end locations. Next come the room descriptions which are Pete's domain and the puzzles which are mine. If the game is to be programmed using an adventure creator then I do it, if it's to be programmed from scratch then I leave it to Pete. The object descriptions and messages are done between us.

If one of us doesn't like an idea put forward by the other we aren't afraid to say so. Sometimes the initial idea is still used but varied slightly. The main reason we work well together is that we are prepared to listen to arguments put forward by the other. Or we may wait for a few days and reconsider the idea, particularly if the one who came up with the idea feels strongly enough about it.

Getting ideas for adventures isn't difficult but getting new ideas is! The number of times I've rung Pete with what I consider to be a new and innovative idea only to be told that it's already been done are many. Occasionally one or other of us does come up with something that is a little bit different.

In one of my numerous phone calls I asked Pete if he knew of any adventures in which the player took the part of a ghost - he didn't. At last we'd found a new angle. At the time we were both extremely busy with other projects so we decided to offer the idea to Level 9. Pete created the opening introduction to the adventure and we sent it to them. Much to our surprise they loved it and asked us to expand on the idea.

Dropping all our other work temporarily we worked flat out on our ghostly project and sent it in as soon as was humanly possibly. It was hard work, but well worth it when I received a phone call from Pete Austin asking if they could purchase the game concept. I rang Pete Gerrard to discuss it with him and then he rang Level 9 to confirm that they could buy the concept. Fame at last, followed by more hard work as we both rushed to catch up on our other discarded projects!

There are several ways in which you can submit adventures to software companies. You must know your own strengths and weaknesses and be willing to admit to the latter. There is no point in submitting a graphic/text adventure to a software company if the graphics are appalling, they will take one look at the first picture and discard the game. However, it wouldn't hurt to mention in the accompanying letter that you realise the graphics aren't works of art and would be willing to allow someone of the company's choosing to draw the pictures if they feel the game is good enough to market. It would cut down on your royalties, but the main thing is to increase your chances of getting your first game published.

If you know that you aren't a very

If you know that you aren't a very good programmer then it would perhaps be better for you to submit a finished scenario with full explanation of the gameplay. Much better than submitting a bug-ridden program that crashed after every couple of inputs. If you do decide to submit a scenario then make sure that the spelling and grammar are correct. Again, this will increase your chances.

Before you go ahead and submit your work to a company you need to do a bit of research. Write to the companies concerned, not forgetting to enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and ask them if they are in the market for ideas, scenarios, games written using adventure creatures, text only games or text/graphic games. If you don't get a reply then you've probably saved yourself some money by not submitting the finished game. If they can't be bothered to reply to your letter then they probably wouldn't be bothered returning your work and you would lose out on the cost of your disk, accompanying paper work and postage. This way you've only lost a few pence for the cost of your paper and stamps.

Timing is important as well. If a company has projects lined up for a couple of years then they won't be interested in taking on any more work for publication, no matter how good the game. After the initial research is completed and you've received replies to your letters then you need to submit your finished product. This should be as well presented as possible. If you are submitting a finished game then you must also enclose a map, hint sheet, solution and covering letter.

An idea should be well explained with some suggestions as to its implementation. In all cases you must enclose return postage as this will make it more likely that you will receive a reply.

Game designs need to be complete and well explained throughout. Pete and I submitted a game design that we unfortunately didn't manage to sell but we were complemented on the presentation and the thoroughness of the documentation. We were also invited to submit any other designs we may come up with and given constructive criticism, advice and help should we decide to send them anything else.

We enclosed detailed room descriptions, one to a page, with notes giving EXAMINE responses to everything in the room, and details of any other puzzles that had to be completed there. A full list of objects with their descriptions, possible uses, how to get them, where they started in the game and their correct use. A list of characters that abounded within the game, descriptions, uses, background histories and their importance or lack of it within the game.

We also enclosed maps with details written in any locations that had a puzzle or a hidden object. A full solution, a list of all the puzzles, an introduction to the game and an ending. We also wrote the solution in story form explaining what was happening as the player progressed throughout the game.

Every object, puzzle, room, etc. was given a number and we put an index at the front of each section. We then used some plastic folders to keep each section separate from the older and wrote a covering letter. Once we were satisfied that we'd produced a game design that would be easy for anyone to follow, we posted it off and waited.

Waiting is the hardest part of anything. I felt like a small child in November willing the month away so that December would come and Christmas would be near. Wondering if the package had arrived safely and in one piece and then thinking that it would take them a week to open it as we'd wrapped it so securely. Jumping every time the phone rang or the postman called.

Eventually, we decided to begin the next project and hope for the best. We decided after a month that a sufficient amount of time had elapsed for a polite letter of enquiry with a stamped self-addressed envelope for their reply. Sure enough we got a reply thanking us for submitting the game design and telling us that it was under consideration. Once we knew that then it was just a matter of waiting a while longer. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, we were unsuccessful, but at least we knew the game had been considered so we knew that our presentation was up to standard and decided to stick to the same format should we decide to submit another full game design.

You need to be patient, not easy but essential. If you push too hard then you might receive your masterpiece back without it even being considered. I would think that a month in between correspondences is a decent amount of time and, providing you keep the content of your letters polite, you should receive a reply. I would only begin to worry if three months had elapsed with no word at all.

If you decide to give up on one company and try another then it is common courtesy to inform the first company that you no longer wish them to consider your work for publication, and also to inform the second company that your work has been sent elsewhere first and your reasons for sending it to them.

Now is the time to begin your next project. Once you have the basic idea worked out you can write your polite letter of enquiry to the company and inform them that you are currently working on another project if they would be interested in seeing it. This way you will be letting the company know that your first offering wasn't a one-off idea but the first of many.

If you have decided to market your own game and it has been quite successful then it would be well worth considering converting your game onto other machines. If you are lucky enough to have other computers of your own then you can do the conversion yourself. If not then try approaching other home-grown software companies with a view to them converting your game and splitting the profits. You could also offer to convert and market their games using the same agreement. This way you will reach a much larger market and increase your market.

Determination is the name of the game. If you know that your game is good then persevere. When you write your accompanying letter to the software houses you must write it in such a way that it will convince then to at least look at the game. This is not the time to be modest. It is also not the time to be too pushy. Try to find a happy medium.

Everyone is supposed to have one good novel inside them. I feel that everyone also has at least one good adventure inside them just waiting to emerge. Writing an adventure is like writing a book. If you write about something you know then it will succeed. If you are writing about something you don't know anything about then you must do enough research to make sure all your facts are correct.

I will assume that if you have read this far you are now brimming with ideas and raring to go. So, get a pen and paper, write everything down and you're half way there. When you've done that you can switch on the computer and away you go.

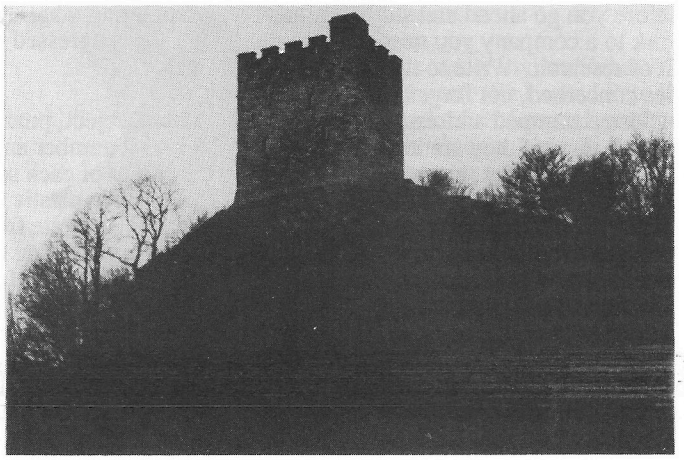
Remember, try to find an original subject, be determined, persevere and this time next year you could be a household name amongst adventurers.

That's all from Sandra for now. If you want to ask Sandra anything about the process of writing adventures, we can pass on any letters.

DO-IT-YOURSELF

LIVE ROLE-PLAYING

Just when you thought it was safe to go down to the woods again, those live role-players are back to turn your country walk into a merciless blood-bath. Still, at least after reading these words of wisdom, they should have a better idea of how to conduct themselves. In last Issue, we dealt with the first two basic steps in running your own adventure, that of Permission and Preparation. This time, we approach the actual day of the event and try to reprint part of the Storyboard from my own day, to give you some idea of the basic rules and principals in use.



PRESENTATION

So the day has arrived! And believe me, you won't get much sleep the night before, so don't expect to! Your arrangements for the day are going to be very time consuming, so allow plenty of room for hold-ups and late arrivals. If you plan to start the adventure at noon, expect to be at least one hour behind throughout. The following steps will take care of most of the happenings and planning for the day, but be prepared for some strange and wonderful scenes that you did not expect, as there are always a few you wont have thought of.

Step One: Wakey! Wakey!
In the morning, you should start to get together all the bits and pieces that you will be needing on the day. Props that have not been finished should be completed and collected together, ticking them from your list as you go. Remember those empty bottles you picked up from the Off Licence about a month ago? Well, now's the time to fill them with all those awful mixtures. Get all your scrolls ready to hand out. Double-check everything. A checklist always helps, which should include all paperwork for the adventure (storyboard, battleboard, maps of the area and rumour lists), your accessories (potions, swords, masks, costumes, scrolls and all other props) and also any other information that you must not forget (including personal gear, such as a watch, compass and pencils). Oh and don't forget the checklist!

Leave youself some extra space on all your sheets for notes that could be added later, or even on the day, just in case there was a sudden brainstorm about getting over problems or fixing inconsistencies in the story.

This also gives you a chance to run a few things over in your mind. Firstly, have you weeded out all the dead-ends in the adventure. When planning the finer details of the adventure, remember that whatever you dream of doing, you will have to do it! That sounds obvious, I know, but attacking the party with three hundred marauding orcs, when you've only got six monsters is going to prove a little difficult. Steer clear of gods, possible stalemate situations (ie. there is a certain artifact that can only be wielded by the guide to kill the Warlock and the guide dies in the second encounter. End of adventure.), and over-ambitious ideas. Think through all the possible endings of an encounter to make sure that the party has at least a chance to work it out. Is it logical? How will they deduce the answer? Is there enough information for them to fathom of out what the hell is going on? Experience in this sort of field really is a must if you want any complexity involved, but it is not really a necessity as long as you don't get too bold. Take it easy. Relax. It's better to have a well-thought-out, enjoyable, basic adventure, than to cross your fingers and hope that your well-laid-plans will actually work, and find that the party can't even solve the first of your seventeen riddles that point the way to the next encounter. Sure, you thought it was easy, but they are going to get

very bored if they find themselves spending the whole day scratching their respective bonces wondering what has got 'four legs and two heads, but cannot speak or swim'!

Secondly, have you made the most of your rumours, if you have decided to include them at all. You can have a lot of fun with the simplest of ideas. Take, for example, something as simple as an orc being captured by the party and telling them that he knows the password that can get them past all the orcs in the forest. He tells them that in orcish it is "Drash Gibblick" or some other unpronouncable rubbish, and is let go. Yet, this really translates to an insult to orcs which tells them to go and attempt something physically impossible with an elf and whenever any orc hears it he goes into a battle frenzy that is little short of a berserk rage. So the orc gets away and the party, for there trust, get themselves into a lot of trouble. It took my group a long while before they caught on why these orcs were attacking them.

A point to note, which really refers back to the dead-end clause, is that you should never write rumours to pass on essential information to the players, as they may miss it or kill the old man who holds it or just forget to ask. The information should be informative, useful and, if they get it, should reward them with an easier time. But that does not mean that it cannot also be contraditory, useless or just plain fibs, as long as this never heavily outweighs the truth. If the party consistantly find these rumours to be false, they will just assume that everyone is an habitual liar.

Thirdly, if you are still stuck for a hit location system, you will have to have a go at battle-boarding. Hit locations for the fighting are easily worked out into main body areas and the monsters only need a number of hits overall before keeling over, so that is simple enough. For a hit location system you will need a 'battleboard' (the diagram will help to visualise this), which is very much like a D&D character sheet and lists how well the character is feeling, how many magic points they have left and where they have been hit. This is easily sketched, but it does allow you to make a note of everything and keep track of the whole party on a few sheets of paper (you can fit about four per sheet).

The only standard rules that seem to cross the board of live role-playing are the calls of the referee to start, stop and temporarily halt the game time or, to put it another way, to have control over the adventurer's reality. These commands are Time In, Time Out and Time Freeze. Time In means that from

THE EVIL WOOD STORYBOARD

For many centuries the eldritch trees of Chadwood have stood as a sacred ground for generations of Druid's. This day the forest is watched over by Thosnorrim the Arch Druid and has long prospered under his might and influence. Yet foul spirits are abroad upon the world and one such malevolent evil has found a lair in the deepest acres of the wood, and his home has been chosen well for it is upon the holy ground of the Druid's; their Barrowmounds. There all their fallen brethren lay and it is sacrilege to step upon its soil. Therefore the Druid's are all but helpless and so outsiders must be brought to defeat this nameless evil before he overthrows the forest and the wood is plunged into eternal darkness...

Schedule:
Area A - From the Obelisk to the Arch Druid's grove.
Hazel meets the Adventurers at the edge of the Chadwood, at the top of the hill marked by an Obelisk (12.00 noon). She will explain that she is a servant of Thosnorrim the Arch Druid and that she has come to act as their guide to his hidden grove. She will also give then a scroll containing a list of eleven items needed for a mysterious potion that they must collect upon the way. The Druid expects them at his home by early afternoon (2.00) and says that they must hurry. She will also say that the woods hereabouts are full of all sorts of evils since The Nameless One took over. They then set off (12.10), heading roughly north-east along the more obvious trails.

(Half an hour after they leave - 12.30), two mercenaries set out after them, having been hired to pick off members of the party; starting with the guide. They will follow until all are slain. They will use bows, garrottes etc. And some of their weapons will be poisoned (slow - acting). They will attempt to slow down and harass the party as much as possible.

Other monster groups in the forest are:
1) Blind Yeo the soothsayer. This fool will blabber on about various prophecies and similar mumbo - jumbo. He is totally useless, except that he carries with him 'The Prediction Book of Amulets and Talismans', which will be used for deciphering the alphabets throughout the adventure.
2) Thosnorrim the Arch Druid. This imperious fellow stays (for the most part) at his grove (which is magically protected as to keep out the evil from the forest). Yet he will have to go on forays out to collect a list of his own ingredients for his potion.
3) Approximately eight Outlaws. These folk are basically chaotic and will attack if provoked. They will rob anything from bodies slain and return to their camp (which will be determined on the day by them).

NB. Just to make the party believe the Vagor beast is around can the monsters roar occasionally in a predetermined way when alone.

When they reach the Arch Druid, he will be waiting for the collected ingredients of the potion (with his trusty cauldron) to transform the bits of leaf and twig into a brew which when cooled and bottled will help them slay the dreaded Vagor beast. He will be able to inform them (in the best melodrama) all about this beast and how it is the scourge of the forest. This will also lead onto the fact that in order to defeat The Nameless One they will have to do the following:
A) Discover The Nameless One's name.
B) Retrieve the Moon Amulet from wherever it lies in the wood.
C) Defeat the dreaded Vagor beast.

Notes:
A) The Nameless One's name is Lanceoreth. This can be found out by the correct interpretation of a scroll in the tavern. Once this has been discovered, they can then use it to hold the demon at bay for a few minutes (gaining valuable time).
B) All Thosnorrim knows of the Moon Amulet is this: It is the symbol of the Keeper Of The Dead, the only person able to traverse the sacred burial grounds.
C) The potion is NOT drunk, but is annointed onto the forehead of any person fighting the beast and the blade of their weapon. In this way they shall be partly immune to the beasts icy claws and able to penetrate its tough skin. All weapons which are not so enchanted shatter on contact with its body.

While at Thosnorrim's camp, the monsters will re-group and be sent onto their new parts. An encampment will be set up, rations will be eaten and a night shall pass. This will last up to an hour (from 2.00 until 3.00). If the guide is indeed poisoned at this point, she will beg to be left with the Druid. The way onward from here is much less certain. Thosnorrim will give compass directions and approximate distances verbally (if they do not have the sense to write it down, then its tough). These will be to arrive at the 'Robin Hood' where he will meet them in three hours. A rough map of the area will also be provided.

then, the adventure is running. In this time, everything that happens is 'in character', you may get attacked or search monsters, in fact do anything that progresses the adventure. Time Out is obviously the opposite of Time In and shifts reality back to the present. When this is called, everyone should instantly stop what they are doing and stand still. No fighting can continue, no one can talk about the adventure and there can certainly be no searching around for clues. This is usually used to count up the number of hits after a battle, but can also be called when the public draw near or when the game has to be suspended due to any other reasons. Time Freeze is exactly the same as Time Out, except that everyone must stop dead in their tracks (as if turned instantly to stone), close their eyes and hum. This is used for spell effects, such as teleportation, when something has to happen instantaneously and the effect cannot be achieved without a skip in the game time. This is cancelled with another Time In call.

Just make sure, that whatever system of rules you do use, you are not left to improvisation. And make certain that the monsters know their parts!

Step Two: The Briefing

Make sure you arrive at the site about three hours before the adventure starts and get the monsters there just after that. Make sure you have talked to all the people who are monstering beforehand, and get things paced out if necessary at a previous meeting. Every monster on the day should have a rough map of the area (or has walked through it at least once), a compass (if necessary) and a copy of the whole Storyboard. Give these out at the briefing and not before, as if someone fails to remember their copy, you'll be stuck.

Step Three: Timing
This is always a problem as trying to put times on everything is very difficult, especially when you've never done this sort of thing before. The best way is to pace things in your mind while actually walking the route. If you walk the whole thing in just over an hour, double it and add about half an hour per major encounter. In my example, this would come out to about eight hours (which it in fact did in the end). Rough times can then be placed on the Storyboard and monster's parts, and can easily be altered if you start late. Time is not really important in the whole course of things, unless you have monsters waiting at certain points or having certain things occurring at certian times (eg. an Assassin begins to follow the party one hour after they set off).

Step Four: How to conduct yourself in the presence of the public
The public's reaction to groups of LRPers is quite mixed, showing surprise, disdain, curiousity and usually try their best to ignore you. Keep away from the public, do not fight whenever anyone is in sight and keep away from public paths. The last thing you want is to be taken to court for assault. The way I got around the problem is to make the Scouts lookouts for the public and to shout if anyone came near. I also said that the public were to be avoided and should not., if at all possible, even catch a glimpse of the party - as they had a death gaze! Well, it seemed to work with me...

Step Five: What to do in the case of emergency (First Aid)
Not much to say on this - just remember to take a pack of plasters, bandages and the essentials of treating cuts, bruises and bumps. In fact, why not get one of the party to assign a Priest to be a healer!

Step Eight: How to speed things up.
If you are hoping to finish at 8.00 pm, and it is already 7.00 with more than a third of the adventure to go, and you will want to speed things up a bit, here's a list of possible courses of action; (i) Cut any random encounters that may be wandering around, as this will slow things down, (ii) Make set encounters easier to overcome, in a hope to get the party along to the climax, (iii) Cut out a chunk of the adventure in one lump or several little pieces. These really depend how you have designed your adventure, but just make sure that whatever you are cutting is not too important! One last thing, keep a check on the time throughout the day - it's better to lose a little here and there rather than a lot all at the end. The end should be a crescendo, not an anti-climax!

Now you should have a better-than-average chance of arranging your own live role-playing extravaganza. If you do, send me your results and a few pictures and I can mention you and your exploits in futher additions. Have you had any good/bad experiences at other 'professional' live role-playing ventures? I would like to hear from you!

* * * *

BUGS FILE

Another batch of bothersome buggies thrown our way by John Sweeney, Peter Bowers and a few of our ever keen-eyed members:

MOEBIUS
Each time you start a fight, Moebius initiates an automatic SAVE for you, thus rubbing out your last SAVE. If you have picked a tough fight and die, you just get restored to the same point and die again, and again, and again... If you want to perform a real SAVE, then SAVE your position and come out of the game, create a new folder on a spare diskette, and copy BOOK.DAT (the index) plus each of the GAMEn.DAT files (which you are using from the B diskette) to your folder. If you die you can copy them back to the B diskette and restart. You can have lots of folders for different positions. You can tell which GAMEn.DAT files you need by SHOWing them (double-click from the desktop), as your character's name is the first thing in the file.

KNIGHT ORC
When you come across the wallet, pick it up immediately, otherwise a bug in the logic prevents you ever using it.

POLICE QUEST
When calling a taxi - or getting in touch with the operator - the Americans forgot that the code is different in the UK and make no mention of it at all. Foget 100, the number you want to call is 0 (or 499 works just as well).

PERSONAL NIGHTMARE : THE FINAL SCENE
If, in the final scene of Personal Nightmare - Don't worry, you'll knowwhen you get there! - you throw your container at your adversary and the game crashes, please contact the Helpline as you will need a replacement copy!

SHOGUN : FULL POINTS
As far as we can tell, there is no way to get full points in Shogun due to the fact that you get 5 points fortwo mutually exclusive actions that require you to be in two places at once! Expect to be 5 points short, unless someone can come up with a way to get full marks.

TANGLEWOOD
SAVE/RESTORE: If you have two drives then SAVE/RESTORE is done using the last drive that the game used - you have to guess or remember - at least therecovery is good and you can retry - but do keep your Tanglewood A diskette protected! John uses a copy of the B diskette for his saves and every time he loads the game he does a RESTART which causes it to access the B drive. Then, most of the time, he can SAVE and RESTORE without changing any diskettes.
THE R-P AREAS: In all cases you should remember the standard mapping techniques of following one 'wall' - it can be extremely useful. Also if you are trying to map an area, don't pick up any items you find; leave them as markers.

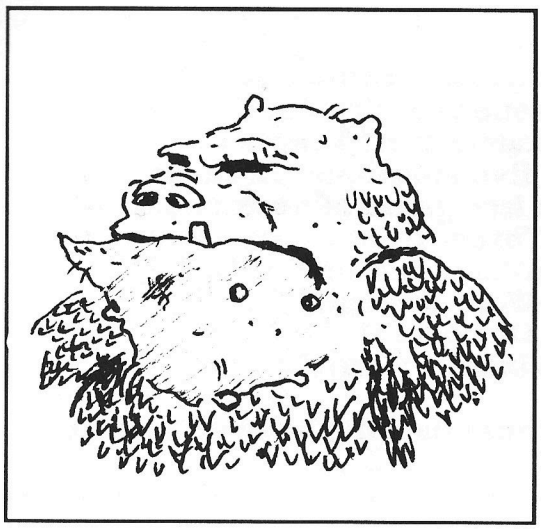
To add to this column, write to the Bugs File.

...WELL SURELY THERE CANNOT BE MANY MORE MONSTERS TO COVER IN THE BESTIARY FILE?... OH REALLY! WELL I NEVER....

The Bestiary File

THE TROLL *(Grossius Wart)*

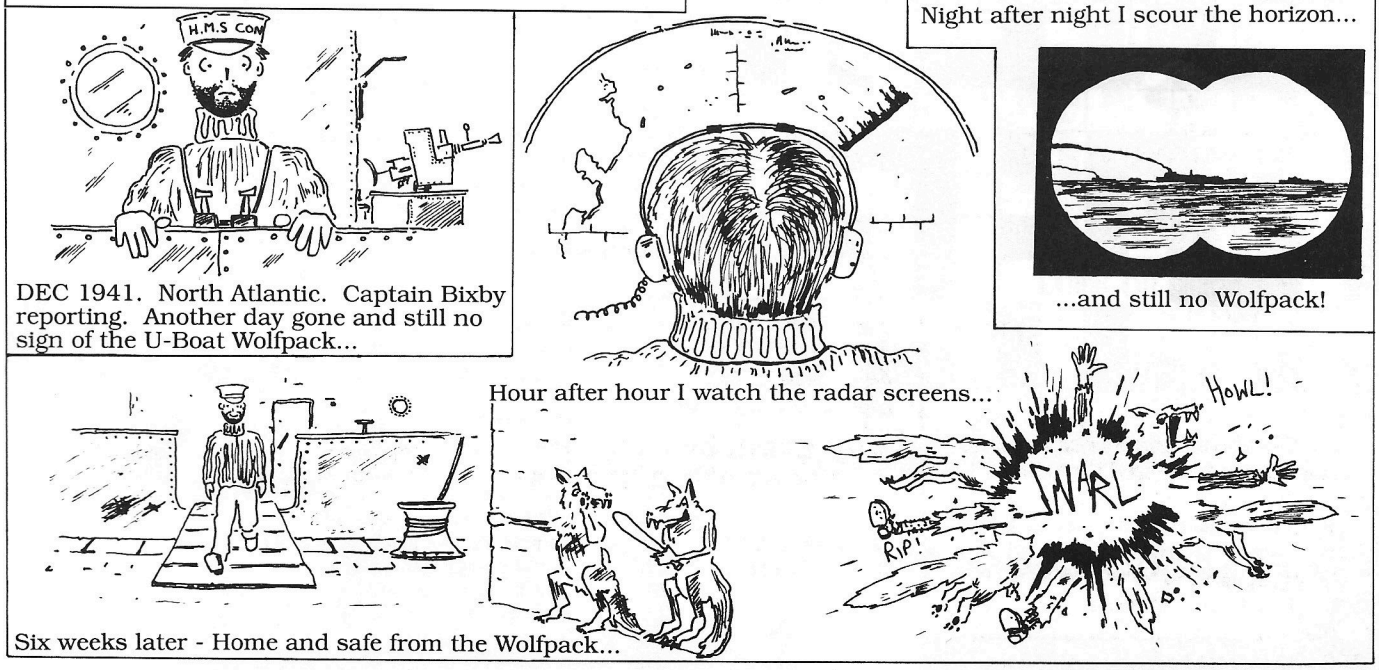
The Time & Magik Trilogy, Zork I, Etc.



SPECIES: Disgusting humanoids
ORIGIN: Unknown, though they appear to have been sneezed from the nostrils of some malodorous Creator
DIMENSIONS: Extremely large humanoid (Over 9 feet tall in some cases)
DIET: Human flesh (Medium rare)
HABITAT: Northern continents
POPULATION DENSITY: Medium rare
GROUPING NUMBER: One to four (but, though family groups are common, arguements usually split potential friends)
LAIR: A troll's idea of a des res is a slimy cave or other subterranean grotto
LIFESPAN: Adventurers notwithstanding, about fifty years
LOCOMOTION: Slow bipedal (ie. they walk)
REPRODUCTION: By cutting off their own legs, arms or even heads
MATING SEASON: Usually in mid-combat
SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: None (avoid trollish dinner parties like the plague)
COMMUNICATION: Grunts and groans
INTELLIGENCE: Dimwits

Trolls are digusting, loathsome and putrid - and those are their best points! They are green, warty individuals with long gangly arms and black, or ginger, matted hair (which usually means that their best form of camouflage is when hiding in densely crowded Heavy Metal concerts). They ooze putrescense and slime their way through life in a series of bad moods. Their greatess fear to Adventurers is their ability to regenerate at an astounding rate, making the best tactics useless against them. Famed for their slothful, bridge-stalking antics, Trolls are best left to their own devices or dropped in acid, neither of which is very easy to do.

BIXBY AND THE ~~WOOLPACK~~ WOLFPACK
By Werner Von Rob.



...WELL, BIG RON, WE HAD THE BEST RESPONSE TO A CROSSWORD EVER IN LAST ISSUE'S PUZZLE PAGE... SO LET'S HAVE ANOTHER EASY ONE...

THREE-IN-ONE CHRISTMAS CONUNDRUM COMPETITION

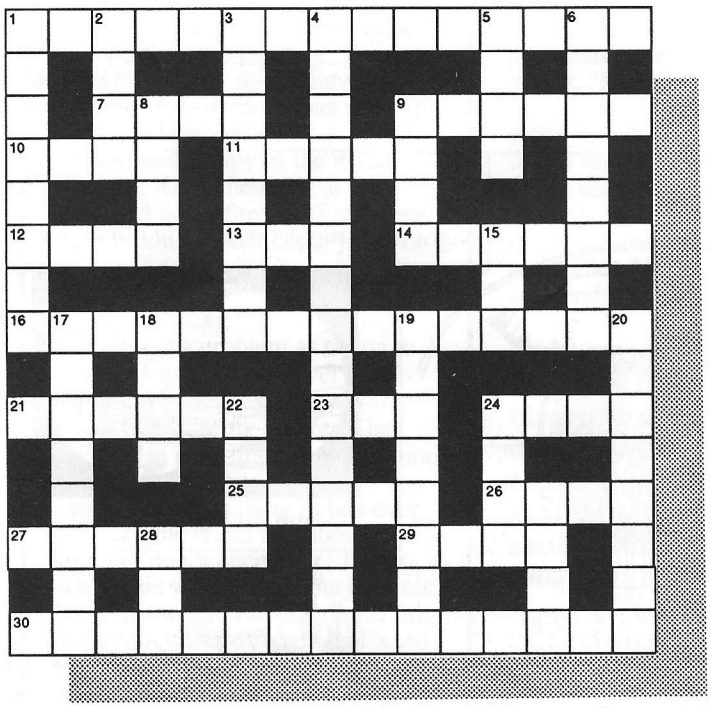
Because it's Christmas, for the Puzzle Pages this Issue we have decided to increase the prizes! There will still be the usual five Loadsamoney-off Vouchers for the winners of each of the three puzzles, but, for the first five solutions that reach us that solve ALL THREE correctly, we shall be giving a free game of your choice! So hurry, for the prizes are waiting in this amazing Three-In-One Christmas Conundrum Competition. To qualify for winning, you must have:

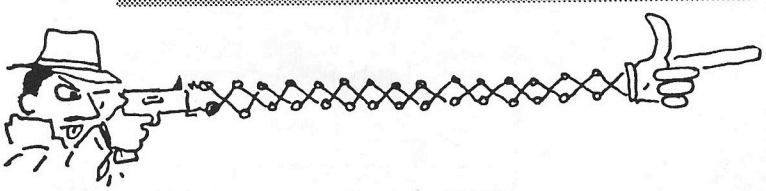
(a) Completed Big Ron's Xmas X-Word correctly,
(b) Unravelled the answer to Luck Or Logic II, *and*,
(c) Found at least <u>sixty</u> words in the Wizard's Word Square!

So get your thinking caps on and try to outwit these baffling bevy of beauties! And first, it's...

BIG RON'S XMAS X-WORD

So what if it is Christmas... I'm not having *another* easy one... On a scale of one-to-ten, this one's an eleven. Hehehe.





ACROSS

1. Tiny workers in the computer (15)
7. Rise around father (4)
9. Short time around Hospital, three times (6)
10. Have these at Christmas, or in May! (4)
11. Odds, all right on direction-uttered (5)
12. Flower in the eye (4)
13. This Napoleonic Marshal doesn't sound like a Yes-man (3)
14. Six died about split (6)
16. The one above who must be obeyed! (3,4,8)
21. Fifty loud questions about water bottles (6)
23. This Cavalier is happy to be carefree (3)
24. Does she moan when told she's no oil painting? (4)
25. Smell Swiss doggy (5)
26. Heading at once to get cold precipitation (4)
27. Steal from a thief (6)
29. A Symphony Orchestra as well (4)
30. Shelley caned Jap for a sickly dessert (5,3,7)

DOWN

1. Lunar haze (8)
2. Price of getting lettuce on time (4)
3. Gives at Christmas (8)
4. Unburied-not Your Speciality (3,2,4,6)
5. Thus, right type (4)
6. Right creed or tape (8)
8. This Goddess is twice (4)
9. Incline to look after (4)
15. Six on a course (3)
17. Infernal heating system (8)
18. Sounds like the lowest voice (4)
19. Aerial pursuit game... (8)
20. ...or astral conflicts (4,4)
22. Pies change and ooze (4)
24. Not a quiet meal (4)
28. A fifty-fifty chance of everything (3)

LUCK OR LOGIC 2

A SEQUEL BY PAUL MAZUMDAR

After Neil Shipman's *Luck or Logic* Team, Paul Mazumdar has used the same characters to create a sequel. Good luck with this one as we return to the aftermath of the recent battle:

After recovering from the recent battle, the party took to searching the corpses. A grisly task, but it seemed a pity to leave any useful items mouldering out in the forest where anyone could pick them up. In the event, however, they found nothing but a small scrap of parchment in the Orc's pocket. As the only member of the party who could read, Girion and Wilbert sat round the parchment trying to work it out. There was a map on it, and the following doggerel:-

"You must pay the Guardian.
Five for the WOLF who prowls
at night,
Seven for the BEAST of hell,
Eight for the CYCLOPS with
limited sight,
Six for the SKUNK who smells."

"I suppose" said Wilbert slowly, "that you're not going to give us any peace 'til we've worked this one out."

"I think I already have, " Girion replied. "The map shows the entrance to the caverns that we've been looking for. I guess all we have to do is pay some sort of Gatemonster twenty-six gold pieces."

"Why twenty-six?"

"Well, it's five plus seven plus eight plus six."

"I think it's more subtle than that, " said Wilbert. "I reckon the Wolf had to pay five, and so on. So we need to work out how much each of us will need to pay."

"Of course!" exclaimed Girion with a flash of insight. "And the two of us will need to pay the same fee!"

How much would each member of the party need to pay? And if anyone has any ideas to continue this story, send them in!

THE WIZARD'S WORD SQUARE

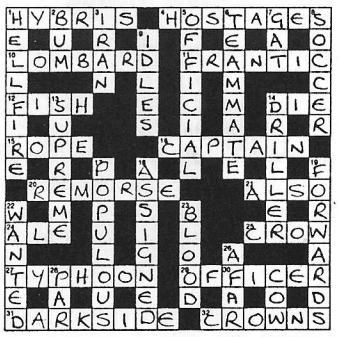
By John.

The last of the three puzzles this Issue is a Word Square which contains words spelt forwards, backwards or diagonally (but always in a straight line). You may notice that there is no list of words to help you, but for a clue I will say that at least half the words have something to do with the last Issue of Confidential in some way (Don't worry if you haven't got Issue 7, it won't help that much). The five winners will be the people who have found the most words - but as a guideline, you need at least sixty. Words can be broken down into more than one word (eg. DEADLETTERBOX will also count as DEAD, LETTER and BOX, plus LET too!) We expect the winners to be close to one hundred! Happy hunting!

E	D	E	A	D	L	E	T	T	E	R	B	O	X	P
R	R	U	E	R	U	T	N	E	V	D	A	U	G	M
I	A	O	N	U	T	S	A	E	B	G	L	O	G	O
P	G	R	N	G	I	P	E	K	H	A	T	O	R	S
M	O	O	I	R	E	S	C	T	I	H	O	T	U	C
A	N	L	T	V	N	O	L	C	E	D	I	V	E	O
V	R	E	P	R	L	A	N	M	R	L	O	T	B	W
U	T	A	E	M	A	E	K	O	A	O	R	R	O	H
H	T	R	I	R	D	I	D	N	I	V	T	A	S	K
L	O	W	O	I	G	A	G	S	Y	E	R	S	S	U
U	H	R	F	R	R	E	R	T	M	C	T	M	I	N
H	S	N	A	K	R	O	Z	E	M	R	L	E	A	K
T	O	T	N	N	K	E	R	R	U	A	V	I	R	A
C	H	K	T	I	G	H	T	A	M	F	E	G	H	T
E	W	I	T	C	H	E	R	A	M	T	H	G	I	N

LAST ISSUE'S ANSWERS

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD



LUCK OR LOGIC?

Wilbert the Wizard kills the Formicant with the fire, Horace the vulture kills the Whiffler with the boots, Moldo the Gnome kills the Swooper with the harp, Girion the Elf kills the Orc with the soup, Craven the Dwarf kills the Troll with the staff.

Send all entries to John Knight at the *Official Secrets* address and win some games for Christmas!

LAST ISSUE"S ANSWERS

...WELL THERE ONLY SEEMS TO BE ROOM FOR ONEPAGE FOR ALL THE LETTERS THIS MONTH... I'M SURE THE MAN IN BLACK WON'T MIND!

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY...

Ring! Ring! -click- "Mr. 'In Black' here. And I thought it was already cramped enough in this cupboard under the stairs, without the Boss cutting one of my pages. Still, I'll keep it brief and get right on with this Issue's mail...

Dear Man In Black,
I would like to thank you for taking the time to help over the Amiga Action Grue Column. Pinching my name was a dirty deed but what really outraged me and various others was the way they lead people to believe that their Grue had been using that name for quite some time, which was not true. In effect they were stealing my reputation (for what it's worth), after all I bet they wouldn't have used a really well-known name like The Grand Elf, The Pilgrim or The White Wizard.

I am amazed how many fellow adventurers wrote to Amiga Action over this issue and even more amazed that you and Confidential should also chip in. By now you all will have seen that the campaign was successful and the false Grue is now called The Boggit, so many thanks to yourself and Confidential.

Keep up the good work, you're doing a great job!
The Grue.

The Man In Black says: No thanks needed, Mr. Grue, just remember me when you slaver by in my next game of *Zork*. I'm glad to see justice done.

Dear Sir,
As you encourage members to write in with their ideas - that's what I'm doing! While the club magazine is excellent, I think it would be a good idea, and popular with club members, to have a *Classified Adverts* page, where members could advertise for sale items they no longer want, or publicise their own groups/interests or place Wanted ads for items they need. This would be a useful and appreciated service, and would help take the pressure of the "Dead Letter Box"! It would be lovely if ads were free to members, but if a charge was necessary, providing this was at a reasonable rate, I am sure it would not put people off, and would also bring in a bit of extra cash. A coupon with a limited number of word spaces could be printed in the magazine, thus, (a) preventing peoples ads from being too wordy, and (b) preventing people from sending in dozens of ads at a time. I would provisionally suggest these classification headings: Items For Sale, Items Wanted, Clubs, Groups/Organisations, Penfriends or Contacts, Employment Offerred/Wanted and Games Help/Solutions or Hints.
Yours sincerely,
Miss Eleanor Smith.

The Man In Black says: Well, I agree this would certainly be a good idea, my only reservation is that people would have to use it to make it work. So if anyone wants to use this service, send a short note with details to me and if we get enough we'll certainly give it a try.

Dear Confidential,
I was most impressed by John Dever's Personnel File in Issue 6 of your magazine. How very wonderful to be into clay pigeon shooting, parachuting, sculpture, and macro-photography, and be married to someone called Melanie, all at the same time. However, I confess to be slightly puzzled by some of Joe's alleged dislikes (Gutter press, TV soap operas, English class snobbery and package holidays).

Shurely shome mishtake, Ed? Shouldn't that have read... English working class newspapers, English working class TV entertainment, English class snobbery and English working class foreign holidays?

Yours truly,
Stu Phillips.

The Man In Black says: Aw, but Mr. Dever is such a nice man...

Dear Sir,
I recently telephoned your office and informed two members of your staff about the new *Amstrad Rom Bios* for the new Amstrad PC2086 only. The *Bios* can be obtained from any Amstrad systems dealer, free of charge. The *Bios* is two chips that control the way DOS is interpreted, hence when the *Bios* was faulty some software (such as *Lombard RAC Rally, Kings Quest 1, 2, Conflict in Vietnam, Seven Cities of Gold* and I am sure that their are others). I have since tried *Kings Quest 1, 2* and both of them worked perfectly (the problem seems to be with key disk protection). When I came to fit my ROM *Bios* I found it difficult to locate the chips that are to be replaced by the *Bios* and this is why I decided to write to you instead. The following instructions tell you exactly how to change the chips over.

BE SURE THAT THE COMPUTER IS DISCONNECTED FROM THE MAINS!

First remove the monitor and take out the four screws located under the cover for the expansion ports and the round tabs on the front of the computer, now disconnect the cable attached to the batteries (disconnecting this will make your computer forget the time and date, so don't worry), you will now have to remove the large rectangular metal box (the PSU), this has about seven wires connected to it so don't yank it out. You should now see a shiny piece of metal that screens the main circuit board, unscrew this and you see two chips in the lower left hand corner of the board, they will be labeled Amstrad 40180 and Amstrad 40179, simply substitute the new chips for the old, (ie. 40179 for 40179 and 40180 for 40180) making sure not to bend any legs on the chip and that you get the chips the correct way around (this is denoted by a shiny round dot on each chip). It's a lot easier to fit the chips than it sounds!

Yours sincerely,
R. Samuels.

The Man In Black says: Sounds a bit technical to me, but a great idea for anyone with an Amstrad PC2086 who wants to get access to a few more games than are currently available.

Well, that just about wraps it up for another Issue. Keep those leters coming in and don't forget to send in your notes for the Classified Ads idea! Bye... (bleep) ...for... (bleep)... -click- Brrrrrrrrrrrr.....

Psssst....The Official, Official Secrets Hint Book Corner

In an effort to broaden the service we can offer members we are always on the look out for new adventure hint books and have even written some of our own. Below is a full list of all the hint and solution books we sell, complete with codes and prices. Remember, there's no post and packing to add. The complete adventurer should never be without them.

GG786 688 ATTACK SUB HINT BOOK by Electronic Arts £5.99
A 41 page survival guide designed to help you get the best out of this brilliant submarine simulation. Includes advanced hunter/killer tactics and 10 mission reports written in the form of a captain's log.

GG351 BARDS TALE 1 HINT BOOK by Electronic Arts £3.99
An invaluable 40 page hint book. Written in the form of an adventurer's journal it takes you logically through this fantasy RPG with maps and solutions to major puzzles.

GG352 BARDS TALE 2 HINT BOOK by Electronic Arts £3.99
A high quality illustrated 40 page hint book in the style of its predecessor. It includes a written journal, maps and solutions to puzzles. Essential adventuring equipment.

GG353 BARDS TALE 3 HINT BOOK by Electronic Arts £3.99
A 30 page hint book containing maps and the useful adventurer's journal.

GG591 CORRUPTION SOLUTION BOOK by John Molloy for Official Secrets £2.50
Are you a winner or a loser? Well, with this solution you'll be a winner as it contains maps and all you need to know about solving the game.

GG219 DUNGEON MASTER HINT BOOK by Official Secrets £2.50
A 24 page book containing detailed maps of every dungeon level, information on spells and general playing tips.

GG592 FISH! SOLUTION BOOK by John Molloy for Official Secrets £2.50
A comprehensive solution to *Magnetic Scrolls* surreal aquatic adventure including general playing tips, a list of locations and problems, coded answers and a full set of maps.

GG590 JINXTER SOLUTION BOOK by John Barnsley for Official Secrets £2.50
This booklet contains several neat and complete game maps, numbered problems, coded answers to prevent you seeing things you might not want to, miscellaneous game details, a list of objects and locations plus a full play-through solution with points.

GG927 SHADOWGATE SOLUTION BOOK by John Trevillian for Official Secrets £2.50
Essential reading for those of you trapped in *Mindscape's* tough icon-driven adventure that's designed to remove red herrings and dead ends. Complete with maps, a list of problems, locations and coded answers.

GG589 THE GUILD OF THIEVES SOLUTION BOOK by John Barnsley for Official Secrets.....£2.50
Several location maps, numbered problems, coded answers, miscellaneous game details, a list of objects and locations plus a full play-through of *Magnetic Scrolls* classic treasure hunt.

GG588 THE PAWN SOLUTION BOOK by Peter Bowers for Official Secrets.....£2.50
A detailed solution including background information, general tips, an alphabetical list of locations, problems and solutions.

GG782 GOLDRUSH HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line.....£6.99
A coded 3D hint book containing decoding filter. Includes complete game walk-through, maps, list of locations and objects plus hidden rooms and characters you may not have encountered. A good game accessory.

GG935 KINGS QUEST 1 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
GG936 KINGS QUEST 2 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
GG937 KINGS QUEST 3 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
GG923 KINGS QUEST 4 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
Comprehensive invisi-clue books with complete list of problems and solutions for these faery tale adventures.

GG773 KINGS QUEST BOOK by Sierra On Line £10.99
A lush 130page paperback with colour pictures and a foreword by Roberta Williams. It includes maps, solutions to Kings Quest 1, 2, 3 and 4, the history of Sierra, a list of the most asked questions, a Kings Quest crossword, pronunciation of names and much more.

GG774 LEISURE SUIT LARRY 1 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
GG775 LEISURE SUIT LARRY 2 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
Comprehensive invisi-clue books containing a complete list of problems and solutions for our love seeking hero.

GG781 MANHUNTER NEW YORK HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
Comprehensive invisi-clue book containing a complete list of problems and solutions for this macabre sci-fi adventure set in New York.

GG776 POLICE QUEST 1 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
GG777 POLICE QUEST 2 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
Comprehensive invisi-clue books with complete list of problems and solutions for the adventures of cop, Sonny Bonds.

GG778 SPACE QUEST 1 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
GG779 SPACE QUEST 2 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
GG780 SPACE QUEST 3 HINT BOOK by Sierra On Line £6.99
Comprehensive invisi-clue books with complete list of problems and solutions for these humorous space adventures.

MERRY Xmas
from
your Friend